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BREAKING THE FETTERS; OR, THE GYPSY'S SECRET.

BY GEORGINA DICKENS,

AUTHOR OF "A SCATHING ORDEAL," "LORD ROTH'S SIN," "PUT TO A TEST," "THE COST OF A FOLLY," ETC.



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CHAPTER I.

AN ACTOR AND A GENTLEMAN.

It was a bright autumn morning, and two ladies were walking and chatting together beneath the trees of Beechwood. They were visitors at Beechwood Villa, the seat of the Hon. John Cawsand, and were now enjoying the early sunshine, and picking their way over the fallen leaves which bestrewed the paths.

One of them was Clara Meredith, a fair and lovely girl of twenty; the other, old Mrs. Witherley, the sister of Mr. Cawsand, and widow of the ex-senator whose name she bore.

They were frequent guests at Beechwood, for Clara was the daughter of Colonel Meredith, its owner's oldest friend, and the promised bride of his grandson, Herbert; and the elder lady's arrival was always so timed as to coincide with the younger's, in order that she might act as chaperon, and occupy that position in her brother's household which the death of his wife, about a year before, had rendered necessary.

"Here we are, alone together again!" exclaimed the girl, thrusting her arm playfully through that of Mrs. Witherley, and attempting to hurry her movements. "Now, let us walk all the way to Gypsy Corner, and tell each other our experience since the last merry meeting."

"Oh, my dear!" screamed her companion, aghast at the quickened pace, and out of breath at the end of the first dozen yards; "what a dreadfully impetuous creature you are! You forget how old I am!"

"No, no, dear Mrs. Witherley," cried Clara, laughing, and again urging her forward; "you are not a day older than when first I knew you. So come along, and let us step out."

"You will kill me, child—you really will; I cannot go further!"

"Why, you are not so old as Mr. Cawsand; and see how he gets about!" replied Miss Meredith, good-humoredly, and relapsing into the usual rate of progression.

"Indeed I am, Clara. I am two years his senior."

"Oh, well, all I can say, then, is, you don't look it."

"Don't I, my dear?" she asked, simpering, and mollified in a moment. "Well, all I know is, I ought to. Think of all the trouble I have had!"

"Trouble!" exclaimed Clara, in amazement.

"Yes. Did I not lose Mr. Witherley two years after my marriage, and have I not been a lone widow ever since?"

"Ho, ho!" the girl laughed, aloud. "And you call that trouble. Why, here you have been a free woman all these years, and all the elderly bachelors in our set are dying for you!"

"Clara, I am shocked at you! What a thoughtless, giddy thing you are! Do be serious! Tell me, when is Herbert coming?"

The question drew a blush upon Miss Meredith's cheek, but it in no way damped her spirits.

"Oh, he will not be here till Thursday—three days more. He is at Newport, as you know, with his regiment, and he cannot get leave till then. The colonel and the major are both away, and he must wait till they return."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and you and I, dear Mrs. Witherley, must be companions and confidantes till that happy time arrives."

"Well, my dear, if you do not think me too

advanced in years and too slow on my legs for your society—"

Clara, for answer, interrupted the old lady by slipping her arm round her waist, and imprinting a hearty kiss upon her shriveled cheek.

"What a dreadful girl you are!" exclaimed the other, quite disconcerted by the suddenness of the attack. "You frightened me, Clara, by seizing me in that unexpected manner! I thought it was some one from behind! I am so fearfully nervous, as you know. You really startled me!"

She was very small and fragile, and, by the side of Miss Meredith, looked still more so. As a girl, her face and figure were delicate and piquant; and now the features had been sharpened by time, and her frame had become attenuated. She was pleasant-looking, though, with her two puffs of white hair upon her forehead, her twinkling little eyes, and still rosy countenance. But she was timid as a hare, and as nervous as a bird.

"I say, Mrs. Witherley," inquired Miss Meredith, suddenly, after proceeding some distance in silence, "actors are gentlemen, are they not?"

"What an extraordinary question, my dear!"

The old lady stopped and wonderingly regarded her.

"But tell me—are they gentlemen?"

"Well, Clara, I hardly know what you mean. Some gentlemen are actors, and some actors are gentlemen. Why, I myself, when I was a girl, used to play with the *Entre-Nous Amateurs*; and my brother John was devoted to the drama; and, for the matter of that, so he is now—"

"Yes, I know all that; but I am referring to professionals."

"Oh, you mean regular actors." Mrs. Witherley screwed up her lips and looked grave. "I am afraid I can give you but little information. Of course there are many very respectable persons, and some even gentlemen among them; but the females, my dear Clara, are terrible creatures. Do you know, one of them actually tried to run away with my George!"

"What, Senator Witherley?"

"Yes, indeed she did!"

"Not after he was married?"

"Yes, my dear, actually! And I was only just in time to save him. She had the audacity to drive up to the house in a brougham, and had already enticed poor George onto the seat beside her, when I rushed out through the front door, down the steps, pushed the servants aside and seized him by the arm just as the coachman was driving off! I quite tremble even now when I think of the escape he had."

"But you do think some of them are gentlemen?"

"Certainly. But what an odd subject. Why do you want to know?"

"Well, I was thinking of Ivan Berrington."

"Who?" inquired the elder lady, turning sharply and trying to catch the name.

"Ivan Berrington. But I forgot you only arrived at the Villa last evening; and you know I have been here nearly two weeks. I must tell you, then, that he belongs to the company at the Courtland Theater, and that he is the principal member of it. We have driven over to see him perform once or twice, and Mr. Cawsand is delighted with him. He says he is as good as McCullough."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes; but he is more than that. You must know he is very handsome, and tall, and dark. Oh, you cannot think," cried the girl, warming with the subject, "what a very superior person he is! And how strangely we came to know him!"

"You seem to know him very well, Clara, dear," remarked Mrs. Witherley, in a quiet manner. "I noticed that you spoke of him without any 'Mr.' before his name."

"Did I?" returned Miss Meredith, with heightened color, and smiling merrily. "Ha, ha! he is no sweetheart of mine, my dear old chaperon; but he is a very nice man for all

that. And he acts so beautifully, and with such feeling. You should have seen him as *Claude Melnotte*."

"How did you come to know him?"

"Well, it was the most romantic thing in the world. It happened this way: The day after I arrived at Beechwood, nothing would do but Mr. Cawsand must have the pony-carriage round to give me a drive. I was, of course, delighted. It was a lovely day, and I enjoyed it immensely. We drove through the woods, visited lots of the old haunts, and then went over the ridge on the road to Courtland. You know the spot; it was just at the top of the hill. Mr. Cawsand was pointing out the City Hall towers in the distance, and dropped his whip. I jumped up at once to regain it, but he would not hear of it; no, he gallantly insisted that I should retain my seat, and that he would get out himself. The consequence was, dear Mrs. Witherley, the pony bolted; and as the reins had fallen about his heels, I was powerless to stop him, and frightened to death. Well, the wretched animal tore away quite out of sight of Mr. Cawsand, who, I heard afterward, was in dreadful alarm, and after making two or three wonderfully narrow shaves of walls and gate-posts, turned down at headlong speed for the river. I had given myself up for lost from the first; but when I saw the water I screamed outright. Just at that minute I noticed a gentleman standing at the cross-road, and he was evidently watching me; for, as I came nearer, he suddenly sprung at the pony's head, seized hold of the bridle, and threw his whole weight on the creature's neck!"

"How noble of him!"

"Yes; that is what I say. Well, he held on, brought the beast to a standstill, and remained with me till Mr. Cawsand, panting and out of breath, appeared upon the scene."

"Who was he, Clara? Did you ask his name?"

"Your brother did. It was Mr. Berrington. Mr. Cawsand would take him back to the Villa to dinner, and would have no denial. But as the gentleman said he had a pressing engagement at Courtland that evening, and one which could not be put off, a compromise was made, and he stayed to luncheon instead, with the proviso that he should come and dine the following day."

"And did he come?" inquired Mrs. Witherley, who was deeply interested.

"Yes; and he told us who he was—that he was an actor at the Courtland Theater. Of course, your brother was pleased beyond measure. He is so fond of that kind of thing, you know; and he promised that we would drive in and hear him. So we did. We have been three times altogether; and I think he has been invited here about as many times subsequently."

"Rather awkward, was it not, my dear?"

"In what way, Mrs. Witherley?"

"I mean, about doing the honors. How did you manage?"

"Oh, we felt the want of you, badly; but we had to make the best of it. Mr. Cawsand made me take the head of the table; and, of course, Mr. Berrington took me in."

"Why, Clara!"

"Of course he did. Why should he not? Had he not rendered me a service—perhaps saved my life? Indeed, I thought so; and the least I could do was to be civil."

"Well, well; I hope Mr. Berrington understands the position."

"My dear Mrs. Witherley, Mr. Berrington is a gentleman, and not likely to make a mistake."

The point was not so easily settled in the old lady's mind. She merely replied by a monosyllabic "Hum!" and then, pursing up her mouth and assuming a look of solemnity, pursued her way without speaking.

Here was evidently a case for some watchfulness, and one to increase her responsibility as chaperon. How thoughtless of her brother to invite her charge, as she considered Clara, before she herself had been able to shut up

her house in Boston and come down to Beechwood. And what could he be thinking of, to play the host so inconsiderately, under the circumstances, to a perfect stranger, and a gentleman of certain attractions, and to throw the weight of entertaining upon a young girl like Miss Meredith? Why did he not give him a ten-dollar bill on the spot, and have done with it—or at least have waited till Herbert came home, and then show him some attention, if the case demanded it instead of forcing an unknown acquaintance, and giving her no end of worry and anxiety?

"You said he was handsome, did you not, my dear?"

"Yes, very."

"And was there not something about being dark and tall?"

"Oh, yes. He has the blackest eyes and hair I ever saw; large, dark, expressive eyes, which seem to dilate when he speaks, and light up with enthusiasm when he is moved. His hair, too, is of that wavy kind which one rarely sees, and which is so becoming."

"And my brother; was he equally well impressed?"

"I never knew him more cheerful. You see, Mr. Berrington has traveled a great deal, and is so well informed that he could not be otherwise than entertaining. And then he is so good an actor, and so well read in his profession, that your brother was in the seventh heaven. You should have heard him, Mrs. Witherley! I could hardly get a word in edgewise. They were going over old plays together, and spouting the dialogue in turns; and your brother laughed every now and then till the tears came into his eyes!"

"And when does Herbert come, do you say?"

"Heigho! In three days' time—on Thursday."

At that moment Mrs. Witherley, who had been intently regarding some object at half a mile's distance from her, and which the stems of the trees had until now obscured, suddenly turned round, and taking to her heels, scudded away with amazing rapidity back along the path they were traversing. Clara, who for the instant was surprised and dumfounded by the unexpected and extraordinary movement, followed her, and, by a few rapid steps, placed herself abreast.

"What is it—what is it, dear Mrs. Witherley? What is the matter?"

"Oh, my dear Clara!" panted the old lady, clutching the girl's arm with both hands, and looking round over her shoulder. "Those horrid Gypsies! I saw them all encamped yonder. There—there's one of them now, standing up, and coming this way! Clara, let us get back!"

"The Gypsies!" smiled Miss Meredith, drawing her chaperon's arm protectingly through her own. "Why, I brought you here to see them. They are almost always to be found at Gypsy Corner, and they interest me."

"Oh, my dear child, don't say anything so dreadful! Let us get back! I am trembling like an aspen! They'll be telling our fortunes if they catch us! Let us hurry!"

"There, look over there! You need not be afraid; there is Mr. Cawsand in the pony-carriage. Let us cross, and get a ride back to the Villa!"

CHAPTER II.

A GYPSY ENCAMPMENT.

THE Hon. John Cawsand was as hale and hearty a man of sixty-eight winters as could be found in the whole State of Massachusetts. He was tall and thin, with just a trifling stoop in his shoulders from the accumulation of years; but he was wiry and active, bright and clear-headed. As the owner of Beechwood, and a goodly portion of the country surrounding, his reputation as a hospitable host, a kind landlord, a pleasant neighbor, and a good man of business had never been gainsaid. He was certainly a little choleric—many old gentlemen are; but then perhaps there was some ex-

cuse for it. There had been much to try him. The bitter had been mixed with the sweet in a proportion far greater than falls to the lot of many men, and nothing but his inborn goodness of heart had prevented his becoming melancholy and a misanthrope.

Married to a beautiful girl in early life, he became the father of two sons, and both of them were dead. He was now a widower, and childless; the only occupant, besides the usual domestics, of Beechwood Villa.

Of these two sons it is necessary to say something.

The first, the eldest, when a fine, handsome, promising fellow of two-and-twenty, came home from his university to commence that career which his father had planned for him, as heir to Beechwood and a large income. He was named John, after his father, and he was like him not only in person, but in manner and temperament. There were points of difference, however; the counterpart was not quite perfect. For instance, the son was wayward, unwilling to occupy himself with details of matter of fact, and, unlike his father, he was dreamy and romantic. Nevertheless, the father's integrity, good-nature, and honesty of purpose were truly reflected in his favorite boy, and he regarded him with pride and as a worthy successor to the paternal acres. John Cawsand consequently had things pretty much his own way, for his brother, Frank, was two years his junior, and absent for the most part at college. He had his own fast horses in the stables, he kept his yacht at anchor in the bay, he had his guns and his dogs, and twenty people at his heels to do his bidding.

One circumstance alone during his whole lifetime gave his father pain and annoyance, and that was a curious one. The boy had a penchant for visiting the encampment of Gypsies on the meadow just within the north boundary of Beechwood, and as its dusky inhabitants had pitched their tents there from time immemorial, and were to be found there almost all the year round, the lad's visits were more frequent than his father had any notion of. The wild nomad life of these mysterious people had its charm for the fanciful imagination of the boy; their habitations, their occupations, their alleged powers of divination, and, above all, the respect with which they treated him, combined to exercise that influence which most young people feel at some time in their lives, only in a more marked degree.

Some of the Beechwood servants averred that the young master had a playmate there, and that when he went to see her he never went empty-handed. However that may be, it is certain that in after life, when he came home for good, his visits to Gypsy Corner were not discontinued, and that he had not forgotten little Ella, his *protegee*, then a handsome girl of eighteen, the beauty of the Lovel tribe, and the best dressed and nurtured of her fellows.

Mr. Cawsand did what he could to dissuade his son from such a predilection; at one time by harsh words, and at another by threats of banishing the whole colony from their squatting ground, till a period was put to the subject in dispute by the poor youth's death. He was wrecked in his yacht off the coast and he and his crew perished on the rocks near Martha's Vineyard.

Frank, his second son, married a few years later; but was thrown from his horse one day and killed, and left a boy behind him, the sole heir to the property. Frank's wife had followed her husband, but in more peaceable fashion; and now John Cawsand had but the grandson left, and on him he concentrated all that love which he had nowhere else to bestow. So it was not to be wondered at if the old gentleman was sometimes irascible and somewhat out of temper.

"Good-morning, sir," said Markham, the head gardener, touching his hat to his master as he appeared on the hall steps after breakfast.

"What's the matter now, Markham?" asked

his master, assuming that the early greeting boded something unpleasant, and turning toward him inquiringly.

"Why, sir, I came to speak to you about them imps of Satan down at the Corner."

"What of them?" demanded his master angrily, and preparing himself to hear of some new encroachment or depredation.

"Well, sir, I can't keep them out of the grounds nohow. They break down the hedges, trample down the grain in the fields, steal the vegetables, and the fowl-yard ain't free from a visit from them every dark night."

"Have you seen them there?" demanded Mr. Cawsand sharply.

"I can't say as I've actually seen them, sir. They're too sharp for that. But they have left their marks behind them."

"I'll see to it, Markham; I'll see to it. Confound the whole crew of them!" he exclaimed, walking hastily up and down the upper step; "they are the pest of my life! I'll see to it. Tell them, as you go round, to put the pony in the phaeton, and to bring it to the door at once."

Somewhat disturbed and angry at the communication which the man had made to him, John Cawsand continued to pace the circumscribed spot in front of the doorway, till the sound of the approaching phaeton altered the tenor of his thoughts. Entering the mansion for a moment, he soon reappeared equipped for the drive, and taking the reins from the groom in attendance, trotted away down the drive.

Passing along the road which ran through his property, he drove along at a rapid pace, and after a little while descried in the distance the forms of two ladies, whom he recognized as his sister and future wife of his grandson. Seeing that they were endeavoring to attract his attention, he made toward them, and then pulled up and awaited their approach.

"Ha, ha!" he shouted, loud enough to be heard a mile off, and having partially regained his good humor; "what takes you two out so far from the house, this morning? Is it the sunshine, or is it to have your fortunes told by the Gypsies? I see you have been in the direction of their camp."

"Oh, John," gasped Mrs. Witherley, coming up completely exhausted, and struggling to regain her breath; "do, like a good soul, take us up in the carriage! I cannot budge another inch! I have been running for ten minutes—ever since I saw you turn the corner on the road!"

"Running!" exclaimed her brother, laughing, and looking with a comical expression at Clara, whose face was flushed a little by the exercise. "Why, what has made Betsy take to running? Rather unusual, isn't it, eh?"

"Those horrid Gypsies! You know how nervous I always am about them, and we came upon them quite suddenly. I had quite forgotten the locality I was walking in, or I never should have gone near them!"

"Well, well," replied the old gentleman, getting down to arrange the rugs, and highly amused at his sister's adventure and trepidation. "I am just in time, then, for the rescue. But you, Clara, my dear, don't seem at all frightened. How is that? Have they been telling Betsy's fortune?"

"Don't be exasperating, John!" replied the old lady, seating herself in the carriage, and at once becoming assured by her brother's presence.

The next instant Clara was installed in the seat behind, and the two ladies only awaited their escort to resume his position.

"Upon my word," he said gallantly, surveying his fair freight as he stood upon the turf by the roadside, "I hardly counted on this good fortune! I hope Herbert will not be jealous. But, I say," he added, rubbing his nose, and looking at them thoughtfully, "where do you ladies errant want to be driven to? Are you in a hurry?"

"Oh, no!" cried Mrs. Witherley and Clara at the same time.

"Well, then, I'm afraid, Betsy, you will have to tax your nerves a little further yet."

"What do you mean, John?"

"Why, when I pulled up, I was on some little business which will take me to Gypsy Corner, and it is imperative that I go there."

In an instant, and at a bound Mrs. Witherley leaped into the road, and looked reproachfully at her brother.

"John, how dare you trifle with me like this?"

"Tut, tut!" he said, coaxingly; "have no fear, Betsy, my dear. You are safe enough with me. Come, get in again, and let us be off; and then we will drive round the village and home again."

Hesitatingly the old lady took her place, and the vehicle was put in motion. Half a mile brought them to a spot from which the camp was visible, and then they halted.

About a hundred yards in front of them, to the right, and occupying a piece of waste ground about an acre in extent, a motley group were assembled. Two or three caravans were placed so as to form a shelter from the westerly wind, and in the lee about a dozen low and rounded tents were pitched. Inside them, and round about, swarms of children rolled upon the bare earth and played their gambols, while their elders strolled about among the half-famished horses which were tethered in close proximity, or sat in small knots, talking, or engaged upon the necessary business of their calling.

In one place, where a trickle of water ran beside the road, a party of women, young and old, were occupied in ringing out the inner garments of the whole community, spreading them out to dry on the adjacent bushes, and making the landscape picturesque with their prevailing colors of red and yellow.

Some of the men were busy making clothespins, others weaving basket-work, while boys and girls looked on, handed the materials, and learned the mysteries of their apprenticeship.

As the phaeton came in sight, every voice was hushed; and immediately afterward several hasty movements took place, closings, secretings, and hidings, which betrayed a laudable desire to make as respectable appearance as possible, and to create no reasonable doubt as to the honesty of their employments.

Clara watched the scene with evident interest. She had never been so close to the wonderful abodes before, and everything struck her with astonishment and delight.

Poor Mrs. Witherley, on the other hand, was terribly perturbed. She clutched her brother's arm with one hand, and laid hold of Miss Meredith's shoulder with the other.

"Good heavens, John!" she exclaimed, suddenly, noticing a desire on his part to free himself from her grasp; "surely you are not going to get down?"

"Yes, Betsy," he replied, quietly handing her the reins. "I shall not detain you long. Clara will look after you, and protect you as well as I could. You will not lose sight of me."

Descending from the vehicle, and moving a pace or two in front of it, he looked intently at the Gypsies' camp, and then called out, "Some one tell Richard Lovel to come to me. I wish to speak to him."

As his words reached the people, there was a stir among them. Voices were heard repeating them, and gesticulations were made to enforce their meaning.

Quickly a lad was dispatched to one of the caravans; and there, after a few moments of explanation, an elderly man was seen descending the steps, and quietly regarding those who desired his presence. Satisfied by the scrutiny, he smoothed away the long gray locks from his forehead, pulled his heavy coat about him, and advanced to where Mr. Cawsand was standing.

He was tall and gaunt, of commanding aspect, and of a certain dignity of mien and carriage, indicative not only of power, but also of obedient subjects. His face, bronzed as

it was by the Eastern blood which chased through his veins, and wrinkled by time and exposure, was well formed and intelligent. He was clothed in a long woolen coat, which he wore open, exposing his waistcoat of maroon plush, his knee-breeches and gray worsted stockings. As he passed along from the further end of the encampment to where his visitors awaited him, Clara was able to make these observations, and to note the authoritative manner in which he dismissed those who would have followed him, and disposed by a wave of his hand of those idlers who wished to satisfy their curiosity.

"Sir?" he said, touching his broad felt hat respectfully, and assuming an air of attention.

The dignified manner of the Gypsy, coupled with the remembrance of the object of the visit, so irritated the other, that all his animosities rose up before him, and bitterness, which had been allowed to slumber, broke forth afresh.

"How dare you, you old scoundrel," he burst out, energetically—"how dare you allow those vagabonds of yours to trespass and make depredations on my property? If you cannot control them, I will see what a little hard labor at Courtland will do for them, or else I will dig out the whole nest of you, root and branch, and clear the ground of the nuisance!"

"Let me ask, sir—"

"No; I won't let you ask anything!" fumed Mr. Cawsand. "You have been the pests of my family ever since you were allowed to squat here, and matters are now coming to a crisis. If another complaint reaches me, off you go for good, and I will rail the place in!"

"Had Mr. John lived," replied Richard Lovel, quietly, and unmoved by the other's violence, "things would be different, and perhaps I should not now be obliged to hear myself called a scoundrel by his father."

"Had he lived? What has that to do with it?" asked his father, hastily, and altering his manner.

The Gypsy had spoken mysteriously about him on former occasions, and always with the effect of creating a diversion and altering the old man's train of thought.

Lovel shook his head, and was silent.

"Why do you allude to the lad?" asked Mr. Cawsand, sharply, and moving about with hasty steps in front of the man. "How dare you refer to one whose only occasion of sorrow to me was his silly intercourse with your wretched people?"

"Look here, sir," returned Lovel, proudly, and speaking calmly, as before. "What have you suffered that I have not? If your son's intercourse with my people—and my people loved him, mind, you—if his intercourse with us, I say, brought sorrow to you, do I not trace my own child's death to it? Not his fault—no, no! I do not blame him. I have sorrow too, sir—I have sorrow, too. Ella, my bright-eyed girl, was the only child I had!"

The conversation was taking a turn which the other had not contemplated, and being desirous of changing it, he mollified his demeanor, spoke about the trespassing and the loss of poultry, and ended by accompanying the old man on a visit to the camp.

"Let me tell your fortune, my pretty lady?" said a voice, softly, on the other side of the carriage.

Mrs. Witherley jumped as if she were shot, and turned round in terror.

Close by her stood a middle-aged, swarthy woman, wearing a yellow handkerchief upon her head, and at her elbow a young and pretty girl.

"No, no, no! Go away! I won't—I won't!"

"Then let me tell this sweet young lady's? Cross my palm with silver, darling, and I'll tell you all the stars are saying about you!"

Clara laughed at the woman's insinuating tone, and thinking it might be the quickest way to free herself of her company, she produced a coin and gave it to her.

"Oh, Clara, how indiscreet—how truly dreadful of you!"

"Don't be alarmed, dear Mrs. Witherley; I'm not afraid."

Then, taking off her glove, she playfully held out her hand.

"Now, tell me what you can read there."

As the woman took the delicate pink fingers, and held them in her own rough brown ones, and began to examine the intersecting lines which marked the palm of the hand, the young girl who accompanied her drew near, and looking over the other's shoulder, watched and listened with attentive interest.

She was the fortune-teller's daughter, dark-eyed, like the rest of her race, and of a beauty above the common. She was well-knit, lithe, graceful in her movements, and her habiliments were donned with a care and neatness which contrasted strongly with the other females. Her hair was dressed with studied regard; the red silk bandana which covered it was clean and spotless; there was a string of amber beads upon her neck, and one or two gold rings upon her fingers. She was superior to the rest of them, and the difference was striking.

"Yes," said the elder woman, musingly, as she gazed at the hand before her, and traced the indications with the point of her finger; "there is one who loves you, my pretty dear; and you love him, too. One day you will love him more than you do now."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Clara; "I dare say."

"For Heaven's sake," exclaimed Mrs. Witherley, trying to draw the girl's hand away, "don't have any more told you!"

"Oh, yes; I must hear some more now. I am getting interested. Pray go on, my good woman! Can you tell me who he is?"

"Certainly I can," replied the Gypsy, without hesitation. "He is tall, and dark."

"Yes, but who?"

"I cannot tell you the name; names are not written on the hands; but he is tall, and dark."

"Go away, you terrible person!" cried Mrs. Witherley, again tugging vigorously at the hand, and endeavoring to dissuade her charge from hearing further.

"Shall I marry him?" inquired Miss Meredith gleefully, and raising her voice so as to be heard above the clamor of her chaperon.

"Yes."

"You never shall!" passionately cried the girl, who had been standing beside her mother and devouring every word that was spoken. "You never shall!" she repeated, as she sprung forward, with flashing eyes and heaving bosom, and wrenched Clara's hand away from the fortune-teller's.

For a moment afterward she stood glancing at the three defiantly, and then she turned away hastily, and hurriedly retreated.

"Heaven be praised, John!" ejaculated Mrs. Witherley, as her brother approached the carriage. "You have come just in the nick of time! We have had such an escape! I wonder we are not all killed!"

CHAPTER III.

A RECREANT LOVER.

COURTLAND THEATER, with its dingy pillars in front of it, is situated on one side of a square of what were formerly well-to-do houses. Deserted almost in the daytime, the only pedestrians who pass through the locality are the clerks and business men who are employed in the surrounding offices. By night the place wakes up—at least that portion of it which contains the theater—and a row of brilliant gaslights, a noisy crowd, and the rumbling of vehicles enliven the neighborhood till bedtime.

Against the walls of this house of entertainment flaring posters of various hues, announced to such of the public as chanced to wander past its door that the celebrated tragedian Ivan Berrington was still carrying out his engagement by a nightly appearance, and that Mr. Wings, the manager, was at his wits' end to find standing-room for the ever-increasing audience.

Other placards, interspersed among the larger ones, declared in regretful terms that the period of the gifted actor's visit was drawing to a close, and that after one more performance the Courtland stage would be relegated to that talent which usually supplied it. That "one more performance" had taken place last evening, and the bills still lingered on the walls, as if unwilling to acknowledge the fact that they were an anachronism, and useless.

It was early morning—that is to say, early for those who don the mask and buskin—ten o'clock; and Ivan Berrington, who had just visited the building, was seated in an easy-chair in the manager's private-room, and in conversation with that individual.

Mr. Wings was very deferential. He stood while the other sat; produced brandy and soda-water from his own especial cupboard, and brought forth his cigar-case filled with his own particular Manillas.

"Sorry to lose you, Mr. Berrington. Haven't had the house so well filled for months. Could we possibly come to any arrangement about the winter? I suppose you are engaged ahead though?"

Berrington smiled.

"I can hardly tell you at present what my plans are. But there is plenty of time. Suppose you write to me in a month?"

Mr. Wings was pleased. There was a chance of catching this lion once more, and he beamed with good-nature.

"Let me open another bottle?"

"No more, I thank you, Mr. Wings. I shall still be at my hotel for a day or two, and I can see you again before I leave."

"New York, of course?"

"Yes; New York, I think."

Mr. Berrington rose, brushed away the little spots of dust which had accumulated upon his coat, smoothed his hat, and going to the broken piece of looking-glass above the mantle-piece, gave a few finishing touches to his toilet.

He was of good figure, well and carefully dressed, gentlemanly in his bearing, and, as Clara Meredith had described him to Mrs. Witherley, very handsome.

Mr. Wings watched him admiringly, reached his walking-cane for him, and unable to repress his commendation, burst forth:

"May the gods protect you, Mr. Berrington, and send you back to my boards! I give you my word, sir, the Courtland folks never knew what *Richard the Third* was till last night! You mustn't disappoint them, sir—you mustn't disappoint them!"

"Well, well," said the actor, smiling, "we will see what can be done. Meanwhile, I must say good-by to you, and thank you."

The interview over, Ivan walked out from the close atmosphere of stale gas and orange-peel into the quiet square, and after looking at his watch and considering a moment, slowly wended his way toward his hotel. It was his first day off duty for a month, and he was determined, as the day was fine and promising, to spend it in the country.

But we will now leave the actor to proceed upon his holiday, and go to the American Hotel, at the end of High street, in the bar-room of which a gentleman is waiting, and ready to make our acquaintance.

"Now, then, you fellow!"—he was addressing an obsequious waiter, who, by a wonderful compliance with the visitor's wishes and a great show of alacrity, was solacing himself with the prospect of a well-earned fee; "have you done what I wanted with my valise?"

"Valise? Yes, sir."

"And my ulster?—and the guns?—and the umbrella?"

"Yes, sir. I have taken them all to the office, and booked them. They will be at Beechwood before you, sir, if you're going to walk."

"Oh, all right."

"Hope Mr. Cawsand is well, sir; and Mrs. Witherley, and the young lady?"

"What young lady?" asked the gentleman nonchalantly, and stroking his mustache.

"Well, sir, I mean the lady as is to be your good lady, if I may make so bold."

"Waiter, you are an ass!"

"Yes, sir."

Left alone for a few minutes, Captain Herbert Cawsand, for such he was, turned to the large glass over the empty fireplace, carefully repointed the waxed ends of his long and black mustache, picked his teeth on the heart-brug, and made up his mind for departure.

His age was four-and-twenty, but he certainly looked several years older. There were lines about his eyes and mouth which time alone had not produced; and a blush upon his cheeks which one would have been bold to attribute to nothing else but vigorous health. He was strong, though, and active, well made, and of good height. Of his features, the most noticeable were his eyes. They were dark, and small, and restless. The twinkle in them contained a mixture of impudence and mischief, but their expression wanted stability, and conveyed an idea of cunning and experience, rather than amiability and lofty purpose. He was not bad-looking by any means, though the form of the face was irregular and unclassical. His hair, which was dark and glossy, was parted with scrupulous care, and in the most approved military fashion.

At the present time he was equipped in walking attire, and only required his hat and gloves to complete his costume.

Settling his account with the very agreeable young lady who presided over the ledger in the bar, he did not omit to compliment the fair damsel on her radiant beauty, nor to drink her health in a parting glass of sherry.

Nor did he lose the opportunity of entrapping one of her pearly fingers when she handed him his change, and endeavoring to put it away into his vest-pocket, as part and parcel of the value returned to him.

Neither did he fail to disregard the pretty carnation which suffused the barmaid's cheeks at the trivial occurrence, nor to suggest that the bloom was more lovely than any rose which it had been his fortune to run across.

With his hat slightly poised over his left eye, and smiling in a satisfied manner as he heard the young lady remark to some one near her that "the captain was very affable," Herbert Cawsand stepped into High street, passed along the crowded pavement, for it was Thursday and market-day, and soon found himself on the country road.

The road from Courtland to Beechwood on an autumn afternoon, is one of the prettiest to walk along in the whole county. Much of the highway is bordered on either side by over-hanging trees, and by those wild hedges so peculiar to the county and so charming to the botanist. To the left, at those intervals where the view is open, rich, undulating fields of ruddy earth fill the scene as far as the eye can reach; while to the right the land slopes through emerald pastures to the shallow river, and rises again, after awhile, on the other side to the hills in the distance. The breeze which came from the blue line of sea in front of him had but six miles of land to traverse before it reached his cheek, and the effect was exhilarating and refreshing.

There was only one drawback—the thoroughfare was dusty; and therefore, when half the journey had been accomplished, Captain Cawsand, who knew every inch of the way from boyhood, stepped aside through a gateway and made for a certain path which led to his destination through the fields and by-lanes. The track would strike the turnpike-road again before he got to Beechwood, and it would not only shorten his walk, but be far more agreeable.

He was in high spirits—pleased with himself, and in the humor to please any one else. He was free for a time from the routine of his regiment. Partridge-shooting was just going to begin, and there was female society at the Villa when he cared for it. Besides, hadn't John Cawsand, his grandfather, come down, for the fiftieth time, like a trump, and settled

all those little matters outstanding, cleared away the atmosphere of embarrassment, and set him on his feet again?

Suddenly a girl's voice, singing, fell upon his ear, breaking the stillness, and awakening him from the happy train of thought in which he was indulging. He looked round and listened. The tones came from some little distance, but their cadence was sweet and musical. There was no other sound; and from the unrestrained and fitful manner of the unseen songster, she seemed to be alone and pouring out her heart, like Pon of old, to the trees and flowers around her.

A few more steps brought the captain to a turning, and there before him, and only fifty yards away, the siren was discovered. It was Lottie Worgan, the Gypsy girl, the daughter of the woman who had told Clara Meredith's fortune, the belle of the camp at the Corner. She was attired much the same as she was upon that occasion—if anything, with greater care.

The pet and pride of the community—for she was not only the prettiest and most coquettish of their womankind, but also the niece of Richard Lovel, the head of the tribe—she was exempt from many of those duties which were common to the others. Not that she claimed exemption, but that it was accorded to her. Her hands, unlike those of her fellows, were smooth and shapely; her feet were stockinged and clothed with shoes, and she bore herself as if conscious of superiority.

She had wandered idly from the caravans, singing heedlessly as she strolled along the hedgerows, plucking a tempting blackberry now and then from the brambles, and then stopping to ruminate. The path she had taken was a frequent one with her of late. It led to the high road, along which the coach came rattling, and she liked to watch it and see it pass. But she did not go as far as the road itself. There was a stile in a field some little distance from it, but near enough for a point of observation, and here she sat and waited.

This was her occupation now, and she was whiling away the time in carols.

As the girl's back was toward him, and as she was unaware of his approach, Herbert Cawsand slackened his pace and trod lightly. His first glance told him that she came from Gypsy Corner; and his second that it was Lottie Worgan, a dusky nymph whom he had noticed many a time before in passing, and who, since he saw her last, had grown to be a woman. As he came nearer, his footfall, however he tried to soften it, could not escape the quickened ear of the singer, and she started, hushed her verse, and looked round quickly.

"Good-morning, pretty one," said the captain, advancing to the stile on which the girl remained seated, although she made room for him to pass. "I could not think where all the music came from. For the last minute or two I have been perfectly charmed."

The Gypsy's color heightened at the salutation, and for a moment she cast her eyes about her uneasily; but the next instant she smiled poutingly, and coyishly turned away her head.

The gentleman, who was struck immediately by the maiden's beauty and her picturesque and well-studied apparel, delayed to end the interview; so, having mounted the step and landed on the other side, he turned and spoke to her again.

"Shall I tell your fortune, my pretty one?" he asked, coaxingly, and adopting the tone and manner peculiar to the race when proffering the question. "Cross my palm with something, lady-bird, and I'll tell you all you want to know."

He laughed gayly at his impromptu profession of the chiromantic art, and held out his hand toward her. The girl laughed too. Herbert's comical expression, as he impudently offered to read the mysteries of those stars which none but her tribe could reveal, and, above all, to unravel them for her especial

benefit, brought the smiles to her face till she laughed outright.

She was amused, too, at the incident, for she recognized in the person who addressed her the grandson of John Cawsand, and being naturally a coquette, and quite aware of her good looks, she was flattered by his speech and shy accordingly.

"No, no, sir," she replied, showing her pearly teeth and playing with her apron. "None but the Gypsy people can read the book of future things."

"Don't you believe that," returned the captain, gayly, and drawing a step nearer. "I have learned the whole thing, and what I wasn't taught I told myself."

The girl shook her head incredulously.

"Oh, it is perfectly true, I assure you. Now I know exactly what is going to happen to you. And I can tell you a lot besides."

"Could you?" she said, quietly, still with her head averted.

"Yes, by Jove! Now, first of all—but let me look at your hand."

Lottie was diffident, but he managed to take it.

"There! that's it! Now let me have a look at the lines."

The damsel laughed again at the absurdity of the position; but allowed him to hold her fingers and scrutinize her palm.

"Of course!" exclaimed the young gentleman, without waiting to make a lengthened study. "One thing is plain enough. You have got a sweetheart."

The Gypsy tossed her head and curled her lip. Surely that was nothing wonderful! The wonder would have been if he had said she had not.

"Is that all your friends taught you to discover?" she asked, with just a tone of mocking.

"Oh, dear, no; not by any means. Ha! what is this?"

He looked closely at the open hand, and then at the girl's face.

"He is about to make you some gift or present."

"What?" she inquired, taken off her guard, and bending forward to catch his reply.

"A kiss, darling!" he exclaimed, quickly seizing her round the waist, and pressing his lips to her cheek. "And a deuced good one, too!"

Lottie Worgan leaped from the stile, and stood panting and confronting him. Her color left her face instantaneously, and her eyes were flashing and indignant.

"Come, come!" cried the captain, laughing immoderately at the success of his joke, and attempting to repeat the process; "don't be angry, pretty one. You can't tell fortunes like that! Ha, ha!"

"Look!" she said, as she stepped back and eluded him, and while a malicious expression appeared upon her face, "look! there is someone over there who knows you!"

She pointed over his shoulder as she spoke, and by the seriousness of her manner, diverted him.

Herbert turned his head inquiringly, gazed a moment, and then swore an oath.

Across the field, at the opposite gate, and on the same line of pathway, Clara Meredith was standing!

Good Heavens! had she seen him? How long had she been there? Which way was she looking now? These were the first thoughts which rushed across the captain's brain, and the next were—What was to be done?—what could he say?

Muttering something between his teeth, and nerving himself for an encounter which he knew must be more or less unpleasant, he readjusted his hat, which had become rather out of place, and assuming as jaunty and defiant an air as possible, left the Gypsy girl without ceremony, and walked across the meadow. As he shortened the distance which removed him from the young lady, he noticed that her face was turned toward the road to the right, and that his approach was apparently unperceived.

Perhaps she had not seen him, after all. But, by Jingo! if she didn't, it was a precious close shave!

CHAPTER IV.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

"Ah, ha! I have surprised you!" cried Captain Cawsand, merrily, as he neared the gate against which Miss Meredith was leaning.

"Surprised you, by Jove!"

"You have, certainly!" returned Clara, coldly, and scarcely altering her position.

Herbert bit his lip. What did she mean by such an answer? Did it contain sarcasm? Had the trivial occurrence been witnessed, then? He glanced toward her quickly and suspiciously, but she appeared to be occupied by looking at something in the distance, and her face was not toward him.

"Are you all alone, Clara?" he asked, trying to adopt the same tone as before, but with some confusion and ill-success.

"Yes," she answered, quietly, and for the first time turning toward him. "I foolishly came without Mrs. Witherley. It is not usual for me to walk by myself."

"You didn't come to meet me, did you, Clara?" inquired Herbert, now struck with the idea that she might have done so, and that she accordingly desired to be unaccompanied.

"That was my object in coming here. I knew you preferred the route by the fields, and I thought to intercept you."

"It was awfully kind of you," returned the captain, passing through the gate, and about to close it after him.

"Do not shut it," she said, placing her hand on the rail. "I wish to return by the road."

He saw that there was something wrong. He noticed too, or thought he did, that she had been crying, and that her cheek bore an unwonted flush upon it. He felt that she was constrained and uncordial, utterly unlike herself, and that something had happened to cause vexation, if not downright anger. Certainly he had never found Miss Meredith over-demonstrative or gushing in her affection toward him, and he had never quarreled with her on that account, but her present mode was frigid and repelling. It was not a match of his seeking. Clara was not quite his style. But she had money; would have more, one day; and his grandfather, John Cawsand, had brought the whole thing about. He liked her, however; thought she could be very agreeable when she chose; and he accepted the position of her future husband with praiseworthy obedience.

"Don't you think you will find the road too dusty?" he remarked, offering his arm.

"No; I prefer it to going back the same way."

"Won't you take my arm, then?"

"Many thanks; but I would rather walk singly."

"Hum!" thought young Cawsand, as he paced by her side awhile in silence. "Something is in the wind, that's certain. I wonder if it was that deuced business with the Gypsy? I never saw anything of this kind before. I'm in for it anyhow. Wish I knew how to begin."

A few yards through the meadows brought them to the road, and just as they emerged upon it, the Courtland coach was descried coming up in the distance, and they stopped a moment to allow it to pass. On it came, rejoicing in its hues of black and vermilion, and rattling behind its four gray horses, till within a short distance of the pair who were standing on the pathway, and the driver tightened his reins, slackened speed, pulled up, and touched his hat to the young captain. As he did so, a gentleman on the box, whom Clara instantly recognized as Ivan Berrington, bowed to her and descended; and when he had reached the ground, the vehicle rolled away on its journey.

"Good-morning, Miss Meredith," he said politely, while she gave him her hand, and he

took it with a gesture of pleasure. "Pray forgive me for thus accosting you, but I am going to Beechwood Villa to pay my respects to Mr. Cawsand before I leave the neighborhood, and I should like to know if I may find him at home."

"Oh, yes. He does not go out to-day, and I am sure he will be glad to see you. We ourselves are returning, and shall be pleased if you will accompany us. Let me introduce you to Captain Cawsand, Mr. John Cawsand's grandson."

"Who did you say? I didn't catch the name," said Herbert, stiffly, and twirling his mustache.

"Mr. Berrington—a gentleman who rendered me a signal service some little time back, and a friend of your grandfather."

Young Cawsand said something indistinctly, looked nettled, and immediately cut at the heads of two dandelions with his walking-stick.

The captain's evident desire was to show by his hauteur that he was not only displeased at the effrontery of the person named Berrington in presuming to address the young lady in the manner he had witnessed, but also that he was annoyed at the way in which she had received him, and at the invitation she had given him to form one of the party. It was a failure, however. Its purpose was defeated by his plainness. The motive was too open and undisguised to overlook it. Moreover, she saw that the new-comer was hurt and embarrassed; and as her gratitude for his timely intervention in the matter of the runaway pony had by no means vanished, she was determined to prove to him that she, at least, was not displeased at the meeting.

"I am fatigued a little by my walk," she said, turning to proceed. "May I take your arm, Mr. Berrington?"

Ivan started as he heard the request, flushed, and then turned a little pale.

He was unaware of the relationship in which Miss Meredith and Herbert Cawsand stood to each other; but his instinct told him that she must have a motive for preferring such a request in the presence of one so much better known to her.

Was it simply her amiability which prompted her to gratify him by asking him to support her steps, in remembrance of that "signal service" of which she spoke? Or was it to avoid a *tete-a-tete* with her companion, who seemed churlish and ill-tempered? He chose to believe it was the former, though the unmistakable frown which marked the captain's forehead, and the undisguised compression of the lips, half inclined him to think the latter. However, Ivan Berrington was satisfied. He cared not from which side the wind blew so that the breeze reached his cheek. Whether from Clara's kindness, or Cawsand's uncouthness, the pleasure had been vouchsafed to him, and he troubled not to seek too deeply for the impulse.

"I am very pleased," he said, with well-bred courtesy, and in a subdued manner. "May I also take your wrap?"

"Thank you, if you will be so kind."

The side-path happened to be a narrow one, affording room for two pedestrians only, walking abreast; and consequently, as Clara walked inside, next the hedge, Herbert found himself either before or behind, or in the dusty road. His mood was decidedly peevish from the moment of the introduction, and now he was fast becoming morose and petulant. To add to his vexation, none of the conversation was addressed to him. Berrington certainly made some remark to him about the weather and the appearance of the country, but he had snubbed him at once, and he had not ventured again. As for Clara, she hardly appeared to be aware of his presence.

"And so you are about to leave the neighborhood, Mr. Berrington?" observed the young lady, in a tone of concern which almost made the captain break forth into swearing.

"Yes, I am sorry to say."

"Why should you be sorry?" asked the girl, with interest, and touching the wild flowers with her parasol as she passed them.

"Because my stay in this part of the country has one or two happy associations in it, and I must leave them behind me."

There was just a shade of melancholy in his voice, and he finished rather abruptly, and was silent.

It was a common, everyday kind of observation, and such as would occur to most persons on leaving the place of a month's pleasant sojourn, but it set Miss Meredith thinking.

"Are you going far from here?" she asked, at length, and speaking loud enough for the captain to catch every word, and to lose nothing of the accent of solicitude which accompanied the question.

It was too much for him; it was the last straw on the traditional camel's back, and it broke the power of his endurance. He was walking ahead at the moment, and suddenly turning round, he announced sullenly that his grandfather was expecting him, and started off briskly alone.

A mischievous smile stole over Miss Meredith's face as she saw him depart, but she offered no word of remonstrance, nor did she concern herself in the least. She had seen the meeting with the Gypsy girl, and, as was natural to one of pure and high feeling, she was hurt, indignant, and resentful. She had witnessed the whole transaction.

Unseen by Lottie Worgan, she had been waiting at the gate for several minutes. She saw him approach her; she saw him jesting with her; and, last of all, she saw his disloyalty. She had been insulted, injured to the quick. Shame and anger were burning within her, and, woman-like, she dissembled.

Like Herbert Cawsand, she was not oppressed with too great an ardency of affection; like him, she was no enthusiastic admirer of her betrothed; but she was honest, and loyal, and true. She had been content, young and inexperienced as she was at the time, to allow herself to be engaged as her father had wished her to be; she had been satisfied, as the months went on, to abide by the decision she had made, and to suffer the engagement without enthusiasm; but she had never dreamt of a failure in allegiance or a wavering in fidelity.

Her eyes had to-day been opened, and although scalding tears burst from them upon her face, she repressed the reproaches which were rising to her lips, and withheld her indignation.

There was a pause after the unceremonious departure of the captain, and Ivan's reply was delayed.

"Yes," he answered, somewhat preoccupied by the latest incident; "I think of going to New York. There is some sort of understanding about an engagement there, and I feel obliged to comply with it."

"And will this be your last visit to Courtland?"

"Oh, no; I hope not; but I cannot possibly fix the date."

"Have you held the profession of an actor long? Although I need not ask that, as you are so famous."

Berrington smiled.

"I thank you very much for saying so. I only wish it were true. If I only had power equal to my ambition, I might become so, I will allow. But I have not been at it long enough to be more than an average player; only four or five years."

"Then you were not—I do not understand these matters—were you not brought up to it?"

"No," he replied, laughing. "They wanted to send me to Cambridge and make me a lawyer, or a parson, or something of that kind; but I was too restless, too fond of my freedom, and somehow or other I took to the stage."

"And you do not regret it?"

"Why should I? Has it not given me as much occupation as I wished, and provided me with an income?"

"Then you have finally adopted it?"

"That I cannot say, Miss Meredith. It satisfies me for the present, but the future is undefined."

To change the subject he remarked upon the beauty of the landscape.

"Yes," she said, in reply to his observation, "the view is indeed a lovely one; but I think the nearer we get to Beechwood the more lovely it becomes."

"I have always thought so, too."

"But you have seen it so seldom."

"Not much of late years, certainly; but I knew it well in my boyhood. I used to stay in the neighborhood sometimes during by holidays, and I am familiar with most of its features."

There was a pleasant ring in his voice, and a simple grace in his manner which failed not to have their effect upon his listener. There was a manliness in his carriage, and an elasticity in his step which spoke of courage and resolution, and there was an earnestness and gentleness in the tones of his voice which made them linger in her ear.

Certainly she was prepared to like him because she had been prepossessed in his favor. She saw that he was handsome; she had proved him to be generous and self-sacrificing when he rescued her from death, or at least from dreadful injury; and she felt that she was leaning on the arm of a gentleman.

What would have been her sentiments if she could have read the heart of Ivan Berrington?—if she could have read it as she would have done the page of an open book? Would she have modified her impressions?

Suppose she had been aware that the pleasantness of his voice was tuned by emotions of strong and passionate love?—that the buoyancy of his tread was caused by her own presence, and because her hand was resting on his coat-sleeve? Suppose she had known that ever since their first chance meeting, now a month ago, he had thought of her, dreamed of her, unceasingly? That the freshness of her beauty and the kindness of her manner had fascinated him, enthralled him, and banished every other ideal from his imagination? If she had known that at times his ambition was wide enough, and high enough, to include even the possession of herself, would her estimate of Ivan Berrington have been the same?

She could not have been totally unaware of the existence of some such predilection. Man cannot help betraying his preference, and woman detects it instantly. Certainly, she never guessed the depth of his devotion, or supposed it to be more than the homage due to kindly intercourse.

On the other hand, was Berrington devoid of any tiny spark to guide the current of his thoughts? Had his eyes been too blind to observe the tender interest which beamed in hers?—his perception too dull to notice the marked and rapt attention to his discourse?—the pleasure with which she welcomed his arrival, and the look of solicitude which came upon her when she saw him depart?

However, there was one thing on which there was no room for doubt. Whatever his ears had heard, or his eyes had seen, he felt it now, in his present condition, to be hopeless. What was he? What had he but his name as an actor? How could he aspire, or presume to indulge in such a day-dream?

Nothing but the happening of the fortuitous, nothing but the achievement of position and fortune, could bridge over the gulf between them, and enable him to pursue his suit with any show of equality.

He knew nothing of any existing engagement, though he suspected something when he first saw her and Herbert Cawsand together that afternoon, before the coach stopped; but he dismissed the idea as soon as he had surveyed the situation. He was unaware of any hindrance but his own namelessness, and though the object seemed unattainable, he could not assure himself that it was so.

It was a pleasant walk, those two miles along

the country road. Ivan had never been so happy in his life, and Clara had been by no means miserable. It was only the lodge and the woman standing at the open gates which recalled them to the actual condition of things, and the near termination of the journey.

Berrington thought that Miss Meredith might wish to dispense with the assistance of his arm on reaching the entrance of the domain, and he made a movement as if to free her from the position; but she had apparently resolved to keep possession of it, for she tightened the grasp of her fingers, and, as he thought, was rather ostentatious than otherwise of the position in which she approached the house.

"Thank you very much!" she said, at last, on arriving at the flight of steps. "Without your help I could scarcely have accomplished the distance."

Ivan smiled, and was gratified, handed her the wrap he had been carrying, and followed her to the doorway.

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed John Cawsand, cheerily, coming to the entrance to greet the arrivals; "whom have we here? Why, as I am alive, it is Clara and Her— No! Bless my heart, it is Mr. Berrington! Why—"

"Yes," said Miss Meredith, as she pulled the old man's face down and kissed him on the forehead, "he has come to say good-by to you; he is going away, he says."

"Glad to see you, sir; glad to think you would not run away without paying us a parting visit. And now that I have got you, I shall not let you depart so easily. But where is Herbert? Where is he, Clara, my dear? Where's the boy? Have you not seen him?"

He shook Ivan by the hand, and held it while he awaited the young lady's answer.

"Has he not already come?" she asked, in return, and surprised. "He left us on the road half an hour ago, saying that he would hurry on, as you might be expecting him."

"No," returned his grandfather, satisfied with the reply, and ushering his guest into the hall; "I expect he is in his room, changing his attire. But the young rascal might have come to me first, though. And started off by himself too, did he, Clara? In my day young gentlemen were more gallant." Then turning to Ivan. "Now, Berrington, we dine at seven, and to-morrow you shall help to knock over the partridges."

"To-morrow, my dear sir?"

"Yes; I shan't think of letting you go to-night. Here, Watkins," he called to a servant who passed at the moment; "get the pink room ready for this gentleman." Then resuming with his friend, "Herbert, my grandson, has arrived, and he will be delighted to make your acquaintance. By Jove! we ought to be able to get up something now we have got you. Couldn't we manage something light, and have the neighbors in to see it? How would 'Cut off with a Shilling' do? You could do Sam, I could take old Colonel Berners, and, by Jingo! Clara could do Kitty! What do you say?"

Berrington smiled, to make himself pleasant and to humor his host, and then retreated to his chamber.

CHAPTER V.

JEALOUSY'S THREAT.

It was early morning, and Ivan Berrington had risen from his comfortable couch in the "pink room," and was now engaged upon his toilet. He was fond of early rising; and now that the surroundings were so beautiful, and the day a bright one, he proposed a ramble through the country.

The previous evening had been a happy one. Mr. Cawsand had been kind and hospitable in the extreme. The addition to his usual society had made him merry and talkative, and when he parted with his guest at bedtime, he had learned to like him more than ever. The only drawback had been the sulky demeanor of the grandson. Barely maintaining himself within the bounds of ordinary civility, he had repelled any attempt at familiarity on the part of the actor, had contradicted him more

than once, and, after swallowing his modicum of claret, betook himself to the study, to look up his guns and shooting-gear in readiness for the morning. So, as on the former occasions—Mrs. Witherley, in spite of her struggles against it, had been obliged to retire early on account of her last attack of neuralgia—the province of entertaining had fallen upon Miss Meredith; and, as if to show him that she was in no way disconcerted by the young captain's behavior, she exerted herself to the utmost. When Mr. Caw-sand, toward nine o'clock, having talked himself tired, fell asleep in the easy-chair, she challenged Ivan to a game of chess; and when the old gentleman awoke from his nap she went to the piano and played and sung the best pieces she was mistress of. Encouraged by her efforts to please, and unwilling to make too heavy a demand upon her powers without sustaining some part himself, he looked through the collection of music, and finding some ballads which he knew, sung them to her accompaniment. Then, discovering that his voice was rich and melodious, and his knowledge of the art considerable, a couple of duets were selected; and lastly, he sat down to the instrument and played with execution and taste. A game of piquet with his host finished the amusements; and then, after a chat he retired and slept till daybreak.

Noticing by the clock in the hall, as he passed down the staircase, that there were yet two good hours to breakfast-time, he took his hat from the stand, opened the door, and stepped forth into the air.

The prospect was an inviting one: the breeze was delightful, and there were several objects of interest to be visited. First of all, there was the sea-view from the rising ground a little to the right; then there was the grove; next, the piece of ornamental water with the island and the swans; and, finally, the walk along the avenue.

It was along this avenue that we first met Clara Meredith and Mrs. Witherley; and Ivan having traversed it, he turned aside into the wood, and discovered a path among the brambles. Here the foliage was dark and dense, and the solitude, except for the song of birds, complete.

Pursuing the way, by no means a wide one, by thicket and clearing, through glade and dell, and drinking in the beauties at every step, he came to where the foot-track was intersected by another, and hesitating which to take, he paused. The stems of the trees were too thickly planted to allow of his seeing more than a few yards around him; and thinking that he might wander on till he lost himself, he stopped and examined his watch. He had yet an hour; plenty of time to return at leisure, and even then be early.

"Ivan!" said a voice near him. The voice was low and sweet, but it seemed as if the word had been ejaculated under the influence of sudden surprise.

The breaking of the silence around him was so unexpected, that he started, and turned instinctively to where the sound appeared to come from, and there stood the Gypsy girl, Lottie Worgan, trembling from head to foot, and gazing at him wonderingly.

"Oh, Ivan!" she cried, passionately, after watching him an instant to satisfy herself that she saw him indeed in the flesh, and that he was no phantom; and then gliding toward him, taking his hand and pressing it in both her own, to her lips. "How cruel of you not to come near us—not even to let us know that you are here! Why do you treat us as strangers, and forget us altogether?"

She still retained his hand, and as she finished speaking, she laid her cheek against his arm and kept it there.

"Why, my dear little Lottie," he said, with evident pleasure at the meeting, and caressing the black and glossy hair which fell upon his bosom, "what brings you out so early, and all alone?"

"Oh, we are not far from the Corner, Ivan.

Come back with me and stay with us. You never come to see us."

"Yes, Lottie dear," he said, gently disengaging her, "I was in the camp a week ago, and that was my third visit this month."

"But you kept yourself to uncle Richard's caravan, and you never came to see me!"

"True, dear; but then I could not. I had business with Mr. Lovel, and it was better to keep my visit a secret."

"But why should this secrecy exist? It used not to be so! And then not to tell me that you are here."

"But did you not know it?"

"Yes, I knew it; but not by your telling. I have found it out myself."

She drew a step from him, and regarded him reproachfully.

"I have watched you, Ivan, and I know your errand."

"And what has Lottie Worgan seen," he asked, playfully, "that she should look at me so unkindly?"

"I have seen you every day that you have been to Beechwood. I saw you yesterday."

"Yesterday?"

"Yes. I watched you dismount from the coach. I was waiting by the stile in the field close by; I always go there now to see it pass, because I knew you came by it, and I saw you greet the lady from Beechwood Villa."

"Well, Lottie, and what of that?"

"And I watched you for a long time afterward, and saw her leaning on your arm. I suppose," she added, while her lip began to quiver, and a haughty expression appeared upon her face, "you are too high to think of us now—too fine a gentleman to think of the Worgans?"

"Now you do me injustice, Lottie," he said, advancing and taking her hand. "I never forget you, and I never shall. But there are reasons why I should do as I am now doing. It is not from unkindness, nor from any false pride."

They turned and walked slowly along the path she had taken for her return, and after pursuing it for a while in silence, she suddenly looked up and motioned him to pause.

"You think that lady pretty?" she said, in a tone of half-inquiry. "And you love her, Ivan?"

She watched the effect of her words, as an alchemist would the ingredients which he was submitting to the crucible.

Berrington raised his eyes, and regarded her quickly and curiously, but made no reply, and the girl knew that she had hit the mark.

"But, Ivan," she went on hastily, and breathing hard; "her hair is flaxen, and her eyes are blue!"

And then she stood back, and drawing herself up to her utmost stature, pushed back the handkerchief which hid her own black tresses, and looked at him with those large dark orbs of hers, as much as to say, "Here you have the pattern; the best and brightest of the Gypsy tribe!" The motion was quiet and modest, simply displaying the consciousness of the possession of typical beauty, and of a nature so much in contrast with that of the girl she spoke of.

"I'll tell you what it is, Lottie," he replied, good-humoredly, struck with the grace of her gesture, and unable to repress his admiration; "there are lots of hearts that will break for you yet, and they would be dull indeed if they did not!"

But the Gypsy girl did not receive it as a compliment. First, she glanced sharply and searchingly at his face, and then, bursting into tears, hid her own in both her hands.

"Come, come, Lottie; what is this? What have I said? I meant nothing unkind; I was only joking!"

"Ah, you can joke!" she exclaimed, between her sobs, and trying to repress them; "'tis easy to say a jesting word, but it may tear the heart that hears it."

"Well, well," he returned, soothingly; "I

meant but a compliment to your beauty, Lottie, and I did not think to pain you."

"What is my beauty to me," she cried, almost fiercely, "if Ivan can pass it on to another? What are my good looks, if Ivan thinks me plain? Oh, Ivan, Ivan!"—she flew toward him, and sinking quickly to the ground, embraced his knees and clung to them—"is your face turned from me? Has it come to this, that yonder pale-cheeked girl can make me as a thing of nothing to you? For whom have I lived, Ivan, but for you? Of whom do I dream of night, but of you? If you forget me, what have I but to die?"

Berrington was surprised at the outburst, and inexpressibly agitated at her vehemence. He was touched and pained at the uncontrollable outpouring of the poor girl's breast; he was unprepared for it and confused.

"Rise, Lottie!" he said, at length, gently untwining her arms, and attempting to raise her from her knees.

She saved him the effort; for as suddenly as she had thrown herself before him, as quickly did she regain her feet. Then crossing her hands upon her bosom, she stood by, hanging her head and blushing, as if ashamed at the betrayal which had escaped her.

"You astonish, you amaze me, Lottie! I did not suspect—"

"No!" she ejaculated; "you could not. You are a man, well taught, high in the world, and proud; and I but a poor girl, weak and alone. How could Ivan Berrington, the guest of Beechwood Villa, stoop to be loved by Lottie Worgan? But I know how it is," she continued, drying her tears and losing the softness of her expression; "I guessed it a month ago and yesterday I was convinced of it!"

"Listen to me, Lottie," said Berrington, quietly, and taking a step toward her. "What you have said has grieved and distressed me beyond measure. You do not think me so unkind and so cruel as to despise the love you bear me? I prize and cherish it. I have ever loved you, as my sister!"

"I care not for a brother's love."

"Now you are unreasonable, dear girl."

"Do you love Clara Meredith as a sister?" she asked, hotly.

"I was speaking of my affection for you, Lottie; and I repeat that I love you dearly as a sister—and so I always shall do. I can never forget our childhood. We were as brother and sister then, and that relationship, as far as I am concerned, shall never cease."

"Sister?" she murmured, regarding him intently.

"Yes; my sister. My very dear sister."

"Nay," she replied, still fixing her eyes upon him; "I am, at any rate, your cousin; and I would rather be that than sister."

Ivan returned the glance, and reddened.

"Come, Ivan, dear," she whispered, completely altering her manner, and coming and clasping her hands on his shoulder. "Come, Ivan, dear," she said, softly, looking into his face, and smiling with all her powers of entreaty; "let us be as we were of old. See how I wear my hair, in the braids you said you liked. See how I cover it with the silk bandana which you gave me. I am the same, Ivan; I have not changed! Come back with me to the tents!"

"Not now, Lottie; another time. I have an engagement to-day, and I must return."

"Ha!" she cried, springing from him, and at once banishing all her tenderness. "Then leave me, and go to her! If you prefer her arms to mine, go to them! Go to her, and bask in her smiles, while you can! The time shall come when she shall not be there to welcome you! Begone, I say! Who am I to stop you?"

A few seconds had sufficed to change her whole demeanor. No longer the injured and broken-hearted suppliant, no longer the true and tender lover, she spoke at first with the sharp impetuosity of anger, and then a frenzy of passion seemed to seize her. Her handsome face no longer retained those pretty lines and

curves which it bore erewhile; it was now hard, angular and defiant. Her gestures, just now so graceful and winning, had become bold and threatening, and her voice loud and wrathful.

"See here!" she exclaimed, stepping back as Ivan drew near. "Forget that I have spoken! Forget that you have seen me! Forget my very face and form!" As she spoke, she tore the crimson handkerchief from her head, threw it to the winds, and violently and eagerly undid those careful braids of her luxuriant hair, and scattered it upon her shoulders. "There!" she cried, plucking the rings from her fingers, and hurling them far away into the rushwood. "I have destroyed every trace of my former self; go, and forget that I have loved you!"

"Lottie! for Heaven's sake—"

"No! Come not near me! My path has been crossed! I have been robbed, and by her. I do not blame you, but her; and she shall feel my vengeance!"

"Girl, are you mad? Of what are you speaking?"

"Leave me!" she said, pointing to the direction whence he came—"leave me! But mark! you shall never wed her! Go!" she screamed, seeing him hesitate to obey her; "you have one rival there already, and retribution is coming!"

As she uttered the last word, she turned in the path, and sped, like a deer in its flight, along its windings and intricacies, till a clump of cedars hid her from his sight in the distance.

At first he was stunned and confounded. He knew the quickness of the Gypsy blood: he knew the hot, impulsive temperament which pervaded the whole race; but the momentary transition from pleading gentleness to direful fury, from tones of love to vengeful threats, had not only surprised and shocked him, but actually terrified him; and when she fled away he found himself powerless to follow.

A minute, however, sufficed to shake him from the spell, and following the track she had taken, he pursued it to where he lost sight of her.

Close by him the wood ended, and the open country was visible.

He walked to where the view was unbroken and looked around him.

A quarter of a mile below him curled up the smoke from the camp at Gypsy Corner, and away to the right, and slowly approaching it, he descried the object of his search.

She was walking quietly, and with her head down, evidently returning to the spot she came from, and Ivan Berrington stepped back and traced the path homeward.

"Poor Lottie!" he sighed, reflectively, and for a moment the tears welled into his eyes; "who could have thought that such a fire was smoldering in that dear little heart of hers?"

He stood still, and meditated.

"I never supposed it—never dreamt of it. If I call my whole life to remembrance—and I can do it every page, from my earliest childhood—I can find no incident that could give birth to such a prepossession, no circumstances that could have planted the conviction in her mind that I could ever be otherwise to her than what I am at present. We have been boy and girl together," he continued, slowly resuming his pace; "we slept together beneath the same tent as infants, and we shared the same corner of the caravan; we wandered over the country together as playmates, and we have met again at broken intervals in after life. Fate decreed that we should thus be thrown together. We were different from the others, and we sought each other's society. But nothing rises before me like deception. No rebuking spirit warns me that I have betrayed. My path in life has been different from hers, and she, poor girl, has not seen how or why it diverged. Poor Lottie Worgan! I am unhappy, miserable, that I have been awakened to this knowledge! I must see her, speak to her calmly, and explain."

He quickened his step, for he had yet some distance to travel, and the breakfast hour was near at hand; but he found it utterly impossible to drive the subject from his mind. He strove, by fixing his eyes intently on the landscape, to blot out the remembrance of it for a time, at least, or to put off the consideration of it to a more favorable opportunity; but the attempt was an unsuccessful one.

The menaces he never heeded; he passed them by as the necessary accompaniments of anger; but she seemed to speak with the assumption that Clara Meredith returned his love, and that he had no uphill fight before him.

Had she seen anything, or heard anything, that could lead her to think so, or was it her fear that such a thing would happen that made her fancy it already existed?

And then she hinted at a rival! Who was that?

Was it young Cawsand, his kindly host's grandson?

Surely not! There was nothing in his manner, nothing in hers, to warrant such a conclusion.

However, his stay at Beechwood would soon be over, and on his way back he would take in Gypsy Corner.

The sudden appearance of the massive stone mansion, with its substantial turrets and towers, at last had the desired effect of banishing the wild form and words of Lottie Worgan, and Berrington arrived upon the graveled terrace just as the tongue of the stable-clock gave out the hour of eight.

"Good-morning!—good-morning!" shouted Mr. Cawsand from one of the up-stair windows. "You are an early riser, Mr. Berrington. Come along! The coffee is made, and the muffins are smoking! You'll just be in time for the shooting! I say, have you seen anything of those confounded Gypsies? They've been on my grounds again—deuce take them!"

Without waiting for a reply, the old gentleman turned from the window, and descended to the hall to welcome his guest.

CHAPTER VI.

BREAKING HER FETTERS.

At the breakfast-table at Beechwood Villa all the members of the household were assembled, with the exception of Mrs. Witherley.

She, poor thing, at that particular moment, had her face swathed with a flannel bandage, soaked in laudanum and chamomiles, and was solacing herself with hot tea and toast among the mysteries of her four polished bed-posts.

Clara, bright and radiant, and clothed in a light morning-dress of dainty fashion, excused the attendance of her chaperon, and presided at the coffee-urn.

She greeted Mr. Cawsand on entering the room with her usual kiss upon his forehead, and the old gentleman returned the salute by imprinting two upon her cheek.

She took the hand of Berrington, the guest, and next in order, as of an old acquaintance, replied to his inquiries for her health smilingly and without restraint, and then turned to Herbert Cawsand.

"Good-morning, Clara," he said, without demonstration of any kind.

And then, as if to account for and justify his want of hand-shaking, he busied himself in his pockets, produced a spirit-flask, and went and filled it at the sideboard.

The little incident was lost upon the older man. He was accustomed to the bluntness and brusquerie of his grandson, and he merely passed it by with the mental observation that in his day the taste of a pretty girl's lips was one of the finest appetizers for breakfast he knew of.

Mr. Cawsand was dressed in shooting-coat and gaiters like Herbert, and when the meal was dispatched, he set about the real preparations for the day.

"I say, boy," he exclaimed, rising from the table and addressing the captain, "take Mr.

Berrington to your room and rig him up for the sport. He can't go through the thicket with those light clothes on. Get him—"

"My dear sir—"

"Get him one of your coats, Herbert, and some boots, and—"

"But really, Mr. Cawsand—"

"Nonsense—nonsense, my dear sir; I couldn't think of letting you go out like this. As for gaiters, there are plenty in my dressing-room, and guns. Herbert, go and get your Remington—not the one you use, you know, but the new one."

The black looks and disgust of the captain were so apparent to at least two of the party, that Clara especially, knowing the young gentleman's temperament, expected an immediate outbreak of rudeness.

His grandfather, too, who had noticed the hesitancy, was looking round, and about to repeat in a louder key what he had said before, when Ivan luckily interposed.

"I hope I shall not offend you," he said, laughing gayly at the proposition, "if I say that I shall be glad to be excused. I am unprepared for shooting and out of practice, and if you will pardon me for saying so, at no time very enthusiastic about the pastime. It is want of taste, I know, and enough to condemn me at once in the eyes of sportsmen; but if you will kindly allow me the *entree* of your library, and let me look through some of the volumes during your absence, you will confer upon me a treat which I cannot indulge in very often."

Herbert smiled a sneer at Clara, expressive of the contempt in which he held the man; and without attempting to press the matter, or second his grandfather's wishes, he quitted the breakfast-room for the study, which was the depository of his sporting gear, and equipped himself for partridges.

On the other hand, Mr. Cawsand was mollified. He was more than that; he was flattered and pleased.

If there was one thing more than another at Beechwood Villa on which he prided himself, it was his library.

He had expended many hundreds of dollars upon it, and in the course of years had made a collection the like of which the whole county could not produce.

To have it admired and appreciated was to receive back a portion of the expense he had lavished; and, consequently, when Ivan mentioned it as the alternative, he not only acknowledged that he had chosen a worthy amusement, but considered him a man of sense for so doing.

"Certainly—certainly," he said, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder. "I forgot that your pursuits might give you a preference for such things. Yes, yes; by all means. Get me the key, Clara; you know where I hang it. You shall have it all to yourself. You will find the catalogue in the right-hand corner of the first shelf."

"Very many thanks, Mr. Cawsand."

"And, by the by, you'll find plenty of reading in your line. I've got all the English dramatists' works, and a black-letter Shakespeare. Come," he added, taking the key from Miss Meredith; "I will open the place and set you going, and then you can shift for yourself."

Mr. Cawsand then conducted his friend along the corridor, and arriving at the door of the especial apartment, he unlocked it and introduced him to its treasures.

"There you are," he said, sweeping his arm round the room in the direction of the crowded book-shelves; "I don't forbid smoking. Ring for anything you want, and make yourself comfortable. When you are tired here, there is the drawing-room just outside."

Left to himself, the first thing that occurred to Berrington was to thrust both hands into his pockets, go to the window, and fall into a fit of meditation. First he thought of his host's kindness; next, of Clara Meredith; and then of the undisguised hostility of the grandson, his

apparently causeless rudeness and determined refusal of cordiality.

Was he actually the rival of whom poor Lottie Worgan hinted? And if so, what had been his success—if, indeed, he had already declared his suit?

No; the idea seemed unworthy of a moment's thought. Their natures appeared so different, their tastes so opposite, that he would not entertain it.

By-and-by a tramping of feet upon the gravel recalled him from his reverie, and on looking he beheld the shooting-party starting on their expedition.

It was a pretty sight, and for a moment he watched it with an interest which denoted that under other circumstances he would gladly have had his share of the promised sport. Besides Mr. Cawsand and the captain, two or three of the neighboring land-owners had brought their guns; and with Markham at the head, and accompanied by his dogs and beaters, the whole moved off briskly to the scene of action.

As they passed out of sight, Berrington turned from the window and surveyed the rows of countless books which covered all four walls of the apartment. He then found the catalogue, compared it with the printed numbers, and found the volumes of which Mr. Cawsand had spoken.

These, at least, he would dip into, if only to satisfy the old gentleman on his return that he had employed himself as he told him he should do; but he found the occupation wearisome, and almost devoid of pleasure.

The fact was, he was not "in the vein," and do what he would, he could not concentrate his thoughts upon what the volumes had to tell him.

At the end of a couple of hours passed in the desultory examination of the vast collection, Ivan retired to his room to remove the dust which had accumulated upon his hands, and then descended the stairs to find the drawing-room and to divert himself with its attractions.

Did he think to find Clara there? If so he was disappointed. He had the place to himself, and all its riches and beauties, its costly ornaments, and its gems of art awaiting his admiration.

Sauntering from one object to another, and bestowing interest upon each in succession, charmed with the delicate refinement and tasteful decorations, he passed at length through the long window at the side, the one which opened into the conservatory, and found himself in an atmosphere of peculiar fragrance, and in a bower of exotics, creeping, flowering and hanging, looking like fairy-land in miniature.

Every country in the world seemed to have contributed something, and all appeared to rejoice and flourish in the artificial climate which had been prepared for them. The great mass of the foliage was in the center, reaching to the lofty roof, and all around it ran a tessellated pavement, bordered by choicest flowers, and shaded by Australian ferns and fuchsias.

Ivan was enchanted. Everything was ordered so exquisitely, and so many plants were new and strange to him. Wrapt in admiration he turned the corner of the path, and glancing along it to see what further beauties it contained, he suddenly started, became confused and crimsoned to the forehead.

There was a rustic seat at the extremity, half-hidden by a leafy canopy, and upon it reclined Clara Meredith, absorbed in reading.

Berrington had approached too far to retreat without making his presence known. Had he even contemplated a backward movement it would have been futile, for no sooner had he discovered her presence than she detected his, and springing to her feet, blushed a counterpart of his own.

"I apologize, Miss Meredith," he said, from where he stood, and without attempting to advance. "I was really unaware—I had no idea but what I was the only occupant, or, believe me, I should not have intruded."

As he spoke, he attempted to retrieve his er-

ror and to retire by the way he came; but the reassuring voice of Clara made him pause and hesitate.

The girl laughed pleasantly, closed the book, and placing it under her arm, drew toward him.

"You certainly made me jump, Mr. Berrington. Like yourself, I thought I was alone. I often come here," she added, looking back at the place she had vacated. "I call it my retreat, and sometimes I read here for hours."

"And now I fear I have interrupted you."

"No, not at all. I am glad you have roused me to my duties. I fear you must have thought me a truant. You must be tired by this time of those endless books. Come and look through the drawing-room."

Ivan did not tell her that he had already made the inspection, mentally acknowledging that he could go through the same process a thousand times under her tutelage, so he turned with her delightedly and re-entered the apartment.

"Now, what shall I show you first?" She busied among the tables, and looked at the array of cabinets and cases, undecided what to select. "Are you fond of pictures, Mr. Berrington?"

"Most certainly."

"Then let me show you this album; it is full of views, mostly photographs, and of places abroad. Have you ever been abroad?"

"Yes; but not out of Europe. I know something of France, Germany and Italy. Have you any pictures of those countries?"

"Oh, yes; plenty. You shall see them."

He reached the heavy volume, and laid it before her on the table, and then placing a chair for her, stood by and watched her as she unclasped the fastenings and displayed its secrets.

With all her apparent unconstraint, there was, nevertheless, a perceptible trepidation in all she said and did. There appeared to be an effort to maintain her self-possession, and a nervousness lest her manner should seem otherwise than what she intended it to be. She desired to convey the impression that she was perfectly at her ease, undisturbed and composed, and that she was merely performing an act of courtesy to a visitor left to himself for amusement.

It was a difficult task, however, and unsuccessful.

The studied care with which she sought to conceal her inmost thoughts, and baffle all penetration into her emotions, only served to lay them bare, and to betray them to the very man from whom she sought to hide them.

Had not her imagination dwelt upon him from that first moment when, as if lanced by the hand of Providence, he threw himself between her and destruction, and at the risk of injury saved her unhurt?

Could she forget his noble conduct on that occasion, or the gentleness with which he soothed her fear?

Had she not pictured the whole occurrence a hundred times, and recalled his every word and gesture?

What else but her loyalty to her plighted word to Herbert Cawsand had made her refuse to tell herself that she loved him?

What did she know of, or care for, those hard and fast conventionalities which would declare a man of Ivan Berrington's profession, however high he might stand in it, to be beneath the regard of such a one as herself, and, in case of marriage, a *mesalliance*?

Had she not admired his handsome face and manly figure, and been charmed, almost fascinated, by his conversation and society? And lastly, was she not thinking of him, to the utter destruction of all her powers to concentrate her mind on her book, when he appeared before her in the conservatory?

How, then, could she so maintain herself as not to betray some little mark of weakness, or subdue that agitation which was the tell-tale of her emotions?

On the other hand, Ivan, as he stood by her

side, with his hand resting on the back of her chair, was by no means unmoved.

His fancies, that morning, had not been among the books, nor among the flowers of the greenhouse. One subject alone occupied them, and that was—Clara Meredith!

She could feel the shaking of his hand as it nervously grasped the rail behind her; she could hear his quickened breathing, and note the tremor in his accents; but she still turned over the leaves of the album, and remarked upon the pictures.

"Now, here is one," she said, pressing back the covers, "and one which I think very beautiful. It is in Italy. You have been to Italy, I think you said?"

"Yes," he replied, looking at the view for a moment, and then withdrawing himself, and walking toward the window. "I have passed many happy days there, and I think of going again; perhaps for a permanency."

"And leave America?"

"Yes; leave America altogether."

"How very extraordinary! Why, Mr. Berrington?"

He came and placed himself again beside her, and leaning with one hand on the table, bent down his head, and regarded her intently.

"Because, Miss Meredith, I love you with all the power that the heart of man is capable of feeling!"

"Mr. Berrington!" exclaimed Clara, rising, and turning pale.

"Do not mistake me, Miss Meredith; do not be alarmed. I am not going to say anything that should be a bar to the continuation of the friendly intercourse which I hope to have extended to me till the afternoon, when I take my departure, and see you for the last time. I say for the last time, for having once declared what I have, I banish myself from your presence, and bury the whole subject in my breast."

"But, Mr. Berrington—" began Clara, trembling.

"Nay, my dear young lady," interrupted Ivan, and speaking with apparent calmness; "I am quite aware of my folly—I will not call it presumption, because I have never presumed to entertain the shadow of a hope. I am perfectly conscious of my position, and your own, Miss Meredith. I am thoroughly sensible that to a man like myself, without fortune, name, or anything which the world would esteem to recommend me, to dream of one day possessing a prize so precious as yourself would be madness. But, Clara—let me call you so for once—you have been kind to me. That good old man, your friend, has opened his door to me, and taken me by the hand. I have not been used to such gentle intimacy; I am unaccustomed to beauty and goodness such as yours. Your words, and the tones of your voice, thrill me with a delight which is almost oppressive, and they ring in my ears continually. Do not mistake me, Miss Meredith," he continued, while his voice became a little husky and his eyes sparkled with moisture; "I have felt myself bound to give utterance to what is within me, but you need have no fear. I shall never recur to it. I have spoken—I must have spoken or died—and you have heard me. Henceforth it is buried. Do not despise me, Miss Meredith. Take what I have told you as my homage, and when I leave this house, bid me depart in peace!"

Clara had made two attempts to interrupt him as he proceeded, but his manner was so commanding, so full of dignity, and yet so gentle, that she thought it better to wait till he should cease, and then speak as occasion might require.

She felt, too, that the delay would enable her to overcome her agitation, and to still that throbbing in her bosom which she found herself unable to repress, and to collect that firmness which she knew to be necessary.

"Mr. Berrington," she said, making an effort to speak with calmness, "I shall certainly never think unkindly of you, though the manner of

this avowal, and the time at which you have thought proper to make it, have surprised me. Are you not aware of my position? That I am engaged to Captain Cawsand? That my being a guest in this house is solely due to that circumstance?"

Ivan recoiled at the words were spoken. "I was unaware of it. I never guessed at such a thing. I could not have supposed so. But even had I known it, I should have still declared what I have done already; and without treachery toward him, and most certainly without intending insult to yourself. May Heaven bless you, and make him worthy of you!"

He paused an instant, and then said: "May I take your hand and say farewell? I only await the return of John Cawsand to make my adieu to him, and to depart from Beechwood."

Clara stood irresolute, and remained silent, with her head averted. She did not offer the hand, but he approached her, took it, pressed his lips upon it, and, without another word, left her presence for the library.

A quarter of an hour after Berrington quitted the drawing-room, Captain Cawsand entered it, having just returned from the first part of the shooting, and having cast aside his heavy clothing for other more suitable.

He found Clara seated at the center-table, with her face buried in her hands, and resting on the book of views. On drawing near, he discovered that she was weeping.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, looking at her curiously. "What's this? Tears! Well, if there's one thing I hate more than another, it is to see a woman sniveling. What's in the wind? What has happened?"

Getting no reply, he began again. "By Jove, Clara, I can't make you out! You have been deuced odd to me ever since I came home! You seem so taken up with that sneaking actor fellow that I can't get a civil word out of you. By Jove, I don't like it; and what's more, by Jove, I won't stand it!"

"What tone and language are these?" demanded Clara, rising from the seat, and confronting him indignantly. "You forget yourself, sir!"

"No, I don't, Clara," he returned, doggedly. "If I speak authoritatively, my position toward you warrants me in doing so."

"Then I absolve you from that position at once and forever! No girl with a spark of respect for herself would submit to such arrogance; not even that Gypsy woman whom I saw you salute but yesterday!"

Herbert Cawsand was staggered and speechless at this outburst; and Miss Meredith, throwing a glance of concentrated scorn toward him, gathered up her skirts, and sailed majestically to the door, opened it, and vanished.

CHAPTER VII.

LOTTIE'S REVENGE.

WHEN Clara Meredith quitted the drawing-room her face was flushed and tearless. There was an expression of mingled contempt, defiance, and decision, so utterly unusual to her features, that when she reached her own chamber, and caught them, in passing, in the looking-glass, she almost started at the change which had come upon her countenance.

If Herbert did not realize the full meaning of the words she uttered, she certainly did; and the air of determination which she wore indicated a strength of purpose in accordance with it. Without a moment's reflection, she knew that she had cast the die, and that no person on earth should make her reverse it.

The scene which she had witnessed at the stile had decided her on the instant. After that there could be no more confidence; no more of that love which she had been endeavoring to foster for him; no more respect.

It was a treason which matured married life might possibly, in certain cases, pass over after due penitence and protestations; but to a pure, high-minded girl, in the heyday of her life and beauty, it was the crime unpardonable.

Herbert, by his rude behavior, gave her the opportunity, and she accepted it.

Her first idea was to lay the whole matter before Mrs. Witherley, but it occurred to her that the old lady would very probably take the side of the offender, on account of the relationship. Her second was, to think the subject over quietly, and then act according to the decision she might arrive at.

This latter she resolved to do, and with a view to arrange her thoughts the better, she put on her hat, caught up the book she had been reading a short time before, and leaving the mansion, went in quest of some unfrequented spot where she might indulge her humor, and, free from all observation, think the question out to her heart's content.

Some little time after her departure, the sound of the hall clock striking twelve reached the ears of Ivan Berrington as he promenaded thoughtfully up and down the whole length of the library.

It flashed across him immediately that the luncheon hour would be at one, and as he had no inclination to prolong his stay so as to be included in that meal, he resolved to seek out Mr. Cawsand and bid him farewell.

After the little interview with Clara it would be far better to avoid the occasion of a meeting, constrained as it must be under the circumstances; and considering the unequivocal bearing of the captain toward him, and the indisposition of Mrs. Witherley, such a course seemed imperative.

Accordingly, he roused himself from his abstraction, passed out of the apartment, crossed the hall, and tapped at the drawing-room door.

"Ha, Berrington!" said his host, looking up from his cushioned chair, and speaking with a pleasant gayety; "here I am, you see, and with my boots off. The ground was a trifle too rough for my feet this morning; or I suppose I can't stand the work quite so well as I used, so I have changed my gaiters for slippers, and am taking it easy. How did you get on with the books? I am afraid you have been dull."

"I have been delighted, Mr. Cawsand. Of course I could do little more than admire in the time; but I managed to light upon the volumes you spoke of. I bring you back the key, and thank you very much."

"Well, then, you can have your shooting after all. They start again after luncheon. Herbert came back with me, but the rest of them have gone to the lodge."

"You are very kind; but I think not to-day. Indeed, I have come to say good-by, and to express how much I am indebted to you for your kindness."

"Tut, tut! Say good-by? Nonsense, nonsense! I can't let you run away like that."

"I should indeed be sorry to curtail my visit if I did not know that it is imperative that I should be elsewhere," he replied, smiling; "but I have business which I must not neglect, and—"

"At all events, you can stay to luncheon surely? I'll ring and order it at once."

"Pray do not think of it, sir. I have exactly a quarter of an hour, and if I start at once, I shall catch the Courtland coach as it passes the north gate."

"Well, Berrington," said the old gentleman, in a somewhat disappointed tone, but giving up opposition, "if it be imperative, of course I must urge nothing. However, I am sorry to lose you and I hope to see you again. Let me know," he added, after a moment, "whenever you happen to drop into our neighborhood again. You can always send me a line."

"You are extremely kind. I shall not forget my visit to Beechwood Villa, nor the courtesy of its owner."

John Cawsand shook Ivan's hand very cordially, apologized for not accompanying him to the door on account of his present fatigue, and calling after him not to forget the invitation he had given him, turned round in his chair, crossed his legs, and mused.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I'm sorry he's gone. What a way the fellow has with him! Wish he would come oftener. One of the best companions I have met for some time. I wish Herbert would take to him. The acquaintance might improve the lad; he might learn a lot from Berrington."

Strange to say the two persons of whom he was thinking were at that moment on the high-road to a greater knowledge of each other, and the desire for better intimacy originated with his grandson.

Ivan had reached his hat from the rack and was on the point of departure when he heard himself called, and by a voice which he could not mistake.

"Excuse me, sir, but I should like to have a word with you before you go."

It was Captain Cawsand, and his tone and manner indicated a ruffled temper and the near approach of bluster.

"Certainly," replied Berrington, civilly. "I have not much time to spare, as I wish to catch the coach; but I can afford you a few minutes, nevertheless."

"Step this way, then," was the laconic rejoinder, as Herbert turned round and led the way to the study. "Now," he burst forth, as soon as he had shut the door, and with a look of defiance and hatred, "who the deuce are you?—and what is the underhand business that you are up to in this house?"

"You forget yourself, Captain Cawsand," said Ivan, quietly.

"No, I don't!" asserted the other, loudly, and with excitement. "You have sown dissension here as a return for the old man's condescension, and I'll get to the bottom of it! Who the deuce are you, I ask? Berrington is no more your name than Wellington is mine! Men of your trade have to disguise their origin under the borrowed name of gentlemen. What is the one you were born with?"

"At all events," replied Ivan, mastering his indignation, and endeavoring to preserve his calmness, "supposing such to be the case, nobody is hurt by me, an actor, calling myself 'Berrington,' but every one would ridicule your being thought a 'Wellington.'"

"You mean some impertinence by that!" exclaimed the captain, advancing a pace, and assuming a menacing aspect. "I tell you most distinctly that you are a low, vagabond play-actor, and that you have no claim to the title of gentleman!"

"May I remind you," returned Berrington, with imperturbable coolness, "that your present behavior is a breach of hospitality, and that a breach of hospitality is a thing that gentlemen are careful to avoid?"

"Confound you!" shouted the other, his passion becoming more violent; "if you were a fellow of any position at all I'd call you out, and get that satisfaction from you which persons of my stamp receive from one another!"

"Dueling, my dear sir," rejoined Ivan, as quietly as before, "is a thing of the past. It has gone entirely out of fashion. It was a folly, and very unsatisfactory. Now, when I consider that I have been insulted—don't interrupt me—and my offender requires punishment, I pursue a different plan completely."

"What may that be?" sneered Herbert, scornfully.

"I possess myself of a horsewhip—such a one as this!" He walked to the wall, and took down the very article from the two pegs on which it was resting, and then returned to his former position. "And having done so," he resumed, without betraying the slightest sign of heat or anger, "I take my man like this!"—he suddenly sprang forward, and seizing the captain by the back of his coat-collar, compressed his knuckles so firmly against the nape of his neck that he simply opened his mouth and became speechless. "I take him like this!" continued the actor, holding his adversary at arm's length, as in the grip of a vise, and rendering him as powerless as an infant. "And if I find the demonstration insufficient, I take the horsewhip!"—he raised his hand as if

to strike—"and administer such castigation as I think fit!"

The captain's surprise and terror were so plainly marked by his countenance and struggles, that his captor saw he had produced the desired effect, and released him.

"That is my mode of treatment, sir!" he said, now a little pale, but still very coolly; "but I hope you will not compel me to adopt it. I presume there is no further need for a prolongation of this interview, and, with your permission, I will now leave you!"

Hatred, spite, revenge, every resentful passion, were stamped on Herbert's livid face; but terror of the superior strength and force of mind which had baffled and paralyzed him kept him silent; and Ivan, fixing his eyes upon him significantly, retired from the study and from the house.

A little more time had been taken up with the interview than Berrington had calculated upon, and consequently the walk, which, under the circumstances, would have been taken leisurely, now demanded a brisk pace in order to be at that particular point of the estate where he might intercept the four grays on their return journey to Courtland.

A glance in the direction he required to go showed him immediately that a considerable portion of the distance would be avoided by striking at once across one side of the lawn, and then, by passing over the rustic bridge in the narrow part of the lake, he would gain a path which he had noticed on a former occasion, and so reach the highway at the spot desired. Determining accordingly, he left the beaten road under the avenue, and bore away across the grass.

Although unruffled by the late passage of arms with the grandson of his host, he could not help feeling annoyance that such a circumstance should have occurred to mar the otherwise pleasant remembrance of the inmates of Beechwood. Every association with them was happy but that one; and in that one he found subject of satisfaction, in that he had not been betrayed into any act of violence with the man who was to be the husband of Clara Meredith, and that he had confined himself to such an illustration of his prowess as was sufficient for his purpose. The kindly manner of his old host, and his smile of welcome, he should never forget.

The face and figure of Miss Meredith were graven on his heart; and they formed a picture which would retain its color and freshness as long as life remained to him. Had he sown dissension, as the captain averred, between the two? If so, how?

He asked himself the question steadily and thoughtfully. Certainly he had not done so knowingly or designedly; and from what he had been able to observe, he fancied a disagreement, if any existed, had an origin quite outside himself. One thing he was quite sure of, and that was, Herbert Cawsand was not the man fitted to be Clara Meredith's husband. Not that he considered himself to be the especial and only proper companion for such a girl, but because he could discover no community of thought, inclination, or sympathy between those two who were at this moment the object of his musings.

A walk of five minutes brought him in sight of the piece of water, and a little way further on he could descry the narrow bridge which carried the path across it, and led the way to the north boundary of the grounds. The mansion had now become lost to view on account of the intercepting trees and the undulation of the ground; and the locality to which he had arrived was silent and solitary.

He turned and looked toward the old spot, as if to bid a long farewell to it and all its pleasant memories, and then increased his speed in the same direction as before.

There was something in front of him, however, some fifty yards distant, which caught his eye and made him gaze intently.

It appeared to be a woman, for what he saw seemed to be a portion of a female's dress, the

lower part or skirt; and if so, she must be seated on the ground bordering the footway. The head and body were out of sight, hidden by some intervening shrubs.

Wondering who it could be, and what attraction could induce her to select a place so retired and unfrequented, he became aware, as he drew near, that the person, whoever it might be, was not sitting, as he supposed at first, but reclining.

The discovery awakened an interest not unmixed with apprehension, for he detected no movement or change of position, although he was careful to tread heavily, so as to give notice of his approach. Another step, and a sight met his eye which appalled him.

It was a scene calculated to daunt the stoutest; but to Ivan Berrington it came like the blighting chill of winter, blanching his cheek and stopping the pulsation of his heart. He stood aghast, and for a moment paralyzed.

It was Clara Meredith. She was lying partly on her side, with her right arm under her face and supporting it from the earth, and her left was outstretched along the grass.

On her shoulder, and as far as her elbow, her dress was dabbled in blood. Her features were white, like marble, and smeared with it, and a crimson stain bedewed her waist, and spread as far as his eye could reach.

A catastrophe had happened of a nature which he could not conjecture, but one which told him instinctively touched the poor girl's life.

With a sense of choking, and dashing the tears from his face, he threw himself on his knee, and gently lifting the drooping head, gazed breathlessly at the pallid lips in search of some indication of existence.

"Oh, God!" he cried; "Miss Meredith! Speak, in the name of Heaven!"

A slight, unconscious moan met his ear and told him that she lived, but so feeble and subdued, that help, to be of use, must come at once.

To cry for assistance till the woods around him echoed back the sound was his first employment, and then to discover the wound and the character of it, the second.

As for help reaching him in a spot so remote, an instant's thought taught him that it was next to impossible. He was alone with her; no other aid but his, if he could render any, was at hand, and he was trembling with apprehension.

There was not an instant to lose!

Tenderly and hastily he examined the clothing which covered her bosom, and a sigh of relief escaped him on finding that it bore no trace of violence or injury.

Raising his eyes to the shoulder, where the sleeve was saturated most, he noticed immediately a clear cut in the fabric, an inch or so in length, and evidently leading to the locality of the heart.

Beyond a slight tearing of the dress, as by some pointed instrument, on her left side, and nearly under the arm, there was no other mark to indicate a wound, or to account for the appearances which were presented.

Satisfied so far, he bent his head to look for any change of expression, and then with nervous fingers opened his penknife, and placing the blade of it to that portion of her sleeve which confined the wrist, ran it up carefully, and divided the garment so as to bare the delicate arm entirely.

The origin of the bleeding was revealed instantly. There was a deep and incised puncture a few inches below the shoulder, and blood was still flowing from it freely.

Leaving all surmises as to how or why the mischief had occurred for future consideration, Ivan took out his handkerchief, and tearing it into shreds, joined them together so as to form one long bandage. He next rolled up a portion of it in order to make a compress, and then placing this last immediately on the place of injury, bound it tightly with the other.

So far he appeared to have been successful. His next care was to exert himself to recover

the sufferer to consciousness. Quick in action and ready in resources though he was, Berrington was for an instant at a loss. A spirit-flask, such as he saw Herbert Cawsand filling that morning, would indeed have been precious; but he had none.

There appeared to be no remedy at hand that he could think of. Stay! There was water—the water of the lake. A moment later he had Clara in his arms, and was bearing her toward it. With her head resting on his shoulder, and her cheek against his own, he hurried across the intervening space, and setting down his burden on the sloping bank, removed the scarf which she wore upon her neck, and stooping over the brink, held it in the water. He then approached her, called upon her name in tones of entreaty, and applied it to her lips and temples.

There was at once sufficient sign to stimulate him to further action, and ere long reward overtook him in the shape of a return to semi-sensibility. It was a weary and anxious process—a balancing, as it were, between life and death; but hope increased with every effort, and never quite deserted him.

Helpless and passive as an infant, he bathed the blood-stains from her face and removed them from the wounded arm. He then knelt down again beside her, lifted her so that she could lean against his bosom, and smoothed back the tresses from her forehead.

How he longed to tighten the pressure of his arm as it encircled her and press her to his heart! Ten years of his life would he have given to have laid his lips to hers and brought the color back to them by his rapture; but he refrained.

They were not his.

At length, after many incoherences and evidences of terror, Clara Meredith opened wide her eyes and realized the position. At first the gaze was wild and restless, but when she fully understood her present weakness, and recognized the features of the man in whose arms she was reclining, and whose throbbing breast it was which supported her, she started, and tried to raise herself; but her strength was unequal to the exertion, and slowly she fell back again, and rested as before. She was not unconscious, but utterly powerless and prostrate.

Convinced at last that he must endeavor to remove his charge to where she could obtain that attention which was so necessary, and sensible of her inability to stir without assistance, he raised her tenderly once more in his powerful arms, and bore her away toward the mansion.

Speaking to her as he walked, kindly and encouragingly, in order to awake her from her drowsiness, he succeeded after awhile in restoring her to such a knowledge of passing events that he begged her, if she could possibly make the trial, to approach the house on foot, of course by the support which he would give her, in order not to alarm the household, or shock their good old friend, pale and blood-stained as she was.

"Tell me how it happened?" he asked, as he steadied her footsteps and watched her face with an expression of agony upon his own.

"A Gypsy woman," she answered faintly. "A Gypsy woman stabbed me."

CHAPTER VIII.

A STARTLING REVELATION.

"Don't go!" exclaimed John Cawsand to Berrington, about half an hour after the arrival of a Courtland surgeon, who had been fetched post-haste in the pony-carriage, and who had just returned in the same conveyance. "Don't go!" he cried, almost embracing him in the warmth of his gratitude; "besides, you'll be wanted as a witness."

The fact was, Ivan had not dared to go. From the moment he learned who the assailant was, he was filled with alarm and concern of the most painful nature. He could not fly from the spot till he had been assured of the

state of Miss Meredith, neither could he depart and leave the hot-blooded and misguided Lottie Worgan to the mercies of the law. He knew at once that it was she, and he fully realized the penalty which she had incurred.

"What does the doctor say?" asked Berrington, hastily.

Mr. Cawsand was greatly excited. He had turned away from the actor to pace about the room without waiting for an answer to his entreaty, "Don't go," and now that he heard his voice, he stopped to catch the words.

"What does the doctor say, sir?"

"It is not so serious as we thought, thank God!" he replied. "It is nothing dangerous, I mean, if treated with care; but it might have been—it might have been! She is composed, poor girl; and now that her arm is dressed, she is comparatively without pain. But woe to the wretch who attacked her! I will track that fiend if it costs me my fortune."

He went to the mantle-piece and pulled the bell-handle.

"I will requite them for their ingratitude! To think that my own household should thus be made a mark for their vindictive passions! To think that that poor child, whom I love as a daughter, should be made the victim! They shall feel the weight of my hand if I have yet strength to lift it! This last has filled the measure of all their vagabondism and treachery, and never more shall they pitch their tents at Gypsy Corner!"

He was red in the face with passion and indignation, and as the servant appeared at the door in answer to his summons, he demanded loudly, "Who have gone in search of this woman—this black-skinned savage?"

"There's no one about the house, sir," replied the old butler, obsequiously, "but me and the stable-boy."

"What do you mean, you rascal?" shouted his master.

"All the men-servants, gardeners and all, are off with the shooting-party, sir. Mr. Markham said he wanted all the beaters he could get."

"Confound them all for a pack of idiots! Then send the boy off at once to the Courtland police station, and tell them to send the superintendent up to me without a moment's delay!"

"Yes, sir."

"May I say a word?" interposed Berrington, advancing toward him quickly.

Mr. Cawsand paused in some fresh command he was about to give, and looked at him inquiringly.

"Pardon me for interrupting you, sir. May I, before you dispatch your messenger, say a word to you in private?"

There was great and unmistakable earnestness in his manner, but the other frowned.

He considered the request to trench a little on his prerogative, and stood upon his dignity.

"Of what nature, sir? Do you desire to advise me how to proceed?"

"By no means. I have a special reason, and I beg it as a favor."

"Close the door," he said, to the butler, "and wait outside till I call you." Then, turning to Ivan: "Now, sir, will you oblige me?"

"I do not for a moment presume, Mr. Cawsand, to make a suggestion without some strong motive—that motive I will explain hereafter—but I wish to submit to you that you will be more likely to attain the end in view by having speech with Richard Lovel in the first instance."

Mr. Cawsand regarded him steadily, and relaxed his frown.

"This girl," continued Ivan, "cannot fly from the locality without his knowledge, nor seek a refuge which his people cannot discover. On the other hand, without some additional testimony than the simple recognition, which Miss Meredith will no doubt be able to make when confronted with her, it would be easy, by a combination, to defeat a conviction. If Lovel could be spoken to, I believe

some light might be thrown upon the matter, and the inquiry be assisted."

The other mused, and walking to the fireplace, stood there, and looked down thoughtfully at the hearth-rug.

"And if he should refuse all information, and the woman meanwhile make her escape?"

"If I may say so, sir, I hardly think Lovel is the man to lend himself to an act so base as this. I know something of him, and I venture to pledge myself that he will attend here at your summons."

"You have met him?" asked Mr. Cawsand, a little surprised.

"Yes; and I think you will find him ready to do what is right."

Shocked as Berrington was at the outrage which he felt certain had been committed by no one else than Lottie Worgan, and execrating the cruelty of the deed from the bottom of his heart, he still felt a desire to shield the mistaken creature from the vengeance which he knew must overtake her if apprehended, and it appeared to him that no better way could be devised to shield her than by bringing Lovel, the head person of the tribe, into such a position that he could learn the facts of the case and adopt what line of defense might occur to him. Much as he desired that the crime should not go unpunished, he shrunk from the idea of being her accuser, and of being the means of condemning one who not only had been his companion and playmate of early life, but one whose very incentive to the misdeed was her avowed passion for himself.

"It may be as you say," replied John Cawsand, walking to the door to communicate with the servant. "I can at least make the experiment, and should it fail, I can set the officers of the law to work immediately. It will be but an hour lost. Here," he continued, calling the butler to him; "the pony-phæton is still in the yard. Go and tell the boy to drive to Gypsy Corner without delay, and ask Richard Lovel, the old man, to come to me at once."

"Yes, sir."

"And," whispered Berrington, following the domestic to the door, "tell the boy to say that I am here at the Villa, and that I desire his presence particularly."

"Where is Herbert all this time?" exclaimed the old gentleman, petulantly, resuming his place on the hearth-rug; "he will be in a dreadful way when he returns, and no wonder! I wish I had taken the lad's advice some time ago, and driven the pestiferous swarm out, bag and baggage. This settles it. Out they go now, and for good!"

Ivan remained silent and in thought.

"Most extraordinary thing, eh? What motive could they have in hurting poor Clara? If it had been myself, or even my grandson, I might possibly have understood it. But why they should have shown such deadly hatred and violence to her, a girl who has scarcely ever come in contact with them, is more than I can imagine."

His listener was frowning, and did not reply.

"Upon my soul, Berrington," resumed he, leaving his position suddenly, and seizing the actor's hand, "I owe you a great debt of gratitude! I can scarcely tell you what I feel!" He rubbed his hands across his eyes, and shook a little in his voice. "Miss Meredith is certainly beholden to you for her life, and my grandson that his future wife has been preserved to him! I shall never forget it, Berrington, never! Sit down, and tell me, from first to last, all that you did, and what you think about it."

"And you think there is no danger?" asked Ivan, concernedly, as he drew a chair toward him.

"Indeed, I trust not. The doctor spoke encouragingly. The wound was not an extensive one, but the excessive bleeding had exhausted her. That, he says, is rather favorable than otherwise."

"Thank God!"

"And she desires me to tell you," added Mr. Cawsand, also seating himself, "that she hopes, before you leave us, to be able to express her thankfulness to you personally."

At the end of an hour, during which the whole of the adventure had been narrated and commented upon in every conceivable aspect, the butler reappeared, and informed his master that the phaeton had returned, and that the Gypsy was waiting in the servants' quarters.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Cawsand, hastily rising. "Show him in; show him in here, and tell the fellow with the carriage to remain in readiness in case I want him."

Ivan also arose, but more slowly, and walked toward the window. A minute afterward a heavy step was heard outside, and then the door opened, and Richard Lovel was ushered into the apartment.

As the old man appeared upon the threshold, he paused and looked around him steadily. It seemed as if he expected a greater company and was surprised that there were but two. His bearing was not so dignified as it was on the occasion when the owner of Beechwood visited the camp, and he looked downcast and disturbed.

"You have heard of this outrage?" demanded Mr. Cawsand, advancing a step, and motioning to the domestic to withdraw and close the door.

"I have, sir," replied the Gypsy, lowering his head and folding his hands before him. "I have heard of it, and it grieves me to the heart."

"Of course you know," continued the other, "that the crime was perpetrated by one of your people?"

Lovel kept his gaze upon the carpet, and did not reply.

"Ah, you do not answer!—you admit it! Who is the woman, and what was the motive?"

"I admit that you have been wronged, Mr. Cawsand, and by one of us,"—his hands were moving restlessly, as if under some painful emotion—"but I cannot disclose to you the name of the person. Be merciful, sir, and leave the punishment to me. Do not seek to bring her before the law!"

"No, Lovel. It is a duty I owe to the law, and to the poor young lady who has been so cruelly injured. I must bring her to justice!"

"She is my own flesh and blood, sir!" implored the Gypsy. "Have pity, and let me inflict the punishment! I have the power, sir. I will banish her from the tribe."

"Nonsense, man! You know not what you are talking of! I am glad that you have pointed to the individual in question, and that you repudiate the act; but your own common sense must tell you that it cannot end here. I have a duty to perform in such a case as this, and it must be carried out. Where is the woman?"

"She is my sister's child, sir, and she is still in the camp. I conceal nothing from you. I knew that something had happened when I saw her return about two hours ago, and what I have since heard as I came along leaves me little room to doubt. I know the motive, sir, and it is not such as you imagine. She meant no harm to you or yours."

"No harm to me or mine!" stormed Mr. Cawsand. "To whom, then? Is not Miss Meredith one of my household, and the betrothed of Mr. Herbert? No harm to me or mine, indeed!"

Lovel turned round despairingly. He knew not what to urge. He felt that he had alleged nothing in extenuation, and that he could not palliate the deed. Still, he wanted mercy.

"If you wish to screen yourself," continued John Cawsand, in a determined tone, "and to save others of the gang from being implicated in the matter, you will furnish me with all the assistance in your power. What is the woman's name?"

"Ivan," said the Gypsy, suddenly appealing to Berrington, who was an interested listener, and who was moving about uneasily, "speak a

word for me; say something to soften the squire's anger! I thank Heaven that the lady's life has not been taken; but I know that a crime has been committed. Ivan, he is ignorant of the cause. It was a woman's quarrel, and it had nothing to do with animosity against himself. I am aware of the incentive; I can understand the impulse; but, Ivan, for poor Lottie Worgan's sake, intercede with the squire, and so turn disgrace away from those that belong to me!"

The astonishment of Mr. Cawsand when Lovel called upon Berrington to come to his aid, and invoked him by the familiar name of "Ivan," almost had the effect of making him forget the object of the interview. He looked from one to the other in rapid succession, with a puzzled expression upon his face, and seemed at a loss for words to question the assertions of the speaker, or even to interrupt him.

"Tell him," the Gypsy went on, his voice becoming clearer, and his utterance more voluble,—“tell him that the untutored girl conceived that she had been wronged; that the man she loved had been weaned from her by one of another race, and that she was maddened and revengeful. Tell him that the Eastern blood in our veins is quick to resent; that we are ignorant and passionate, and that the poor girl considers that in striking at the young lady, she was striking at one who had injured her mortally. Tell him this, Ivan; not that it can make the crime lighter, but to account for it.”

"I do not understand," said Mr. Cawsand, perplexed at the many subjects touched upon by Lovel, and at Berrington's silence. "Why do you address yourself to this gentleman as to one whom you know to be acquainted with the matter you are discussing? On what footing do you stand, that you can use the familiarity of his Christian name alone? I am at a loss; I am perplexed!"

Lovel gazed round the room in a troubled manner, and then turning to Berrington, said huskily, "I must tell him. It cannot be kept back longer. Harm will come, instead of good, if I withhold it now."

"Say what you will," returned the actor, "if it can help Lottie. Have no fear of me. I am not ashamed of my connection."

"I call him 'Ivan,' then," replied the Gypsy, holding out his hand to Berrington, who took it readily, "because he is my grandson!"

"Your what?"

"My own grandson, sir."

"Impossible!"

"Not so, John Cawsand. He is my daughter's child; but he knows little of our ways, and is nearly a stranger to us. Circumstances of a peculiar nature have made him what he is, and have placed him in a sphere above his fellows."

"Berrington," said Mr. Cawsand, going toward him, and looking at him incredulously, "you a Gypsy! The man whom I have entertained, admired, made much of, and to whom I am indebted for the kindly service of to-day, and of that other occasion—you, a Gypsy! and that man's grandson!"

"Sir," said Lovel, while a little smile played around his wrinkled features, "does it so astonish you that he is my grandson?"

"It does; I am astounded!"

"What will you say, then, when I tell you that he is yours also?"

The movements and expressions of the three men, as the announcement was made, were something which it is difficult to describe or delineate. The face of the Gypsy was sardonic. He knew well what must be the effect of such a declaration. As he spoke, he folded his arms upon his chest, lowered his chin, and peered forth from under his shaggy eyebrows. There was a look of triumph and defiance in his attitude, and his listeners were impressed with the gravity of his manner, and the apparent consciousness which he possessed of having spoken what he could affirm.

On Ivan the result was as marked as it was on Mr. Cawsand. He knew the relationship

he bore to Lovel, and he was aware that for certain reasons which might prejudice him in his profession, that connection had been kept a secret. But he suspected nothing else. The avowal of his grandfather had dismayed him. He was terrified.

As for John Cawsand, he recoiled before the man, and regarded him as demented. He flushed at first with anger, and then, almost immediately, as he beheld the old Gypsy's earnestness, the color left his cheeks and he became perfectly white.

"How my grandson?" he demanded, forcing his firmness. "What invention is this? What new lying wonder have you brought from Gypsy Corner—eh?"

Lovel appeared as if about to decline the invitation to explain himself, and reluctant to dwell further upon the subject.

"Speak, man, for God's sake!" cried the other; "if there's anything to be said, say it!"

"Well, then," resumed the Gypsy, quietly, "if the time has come for me to speak, I may not keep silence longer. This has been forced upon me, sir. I never intended that this matter should be divulged during your lifetime, for reasons which seemed good to me; but the trouble of my niece compels me to say what I am about to. He"—he pointed to Ivan—"knows nothing of it. He knows himself, and he is known to us, as Ivan Berrington; but his real name, the one in which he was baptized and the one he has not yet borne to the world, is John Cawsand."

"What conspiracy is this?" exclaimed the old gentleman. "Do you think my memory cannot go back to the time at which you are hinting, or that I have forgotten anything?"

"What I am speaking of," returned Lovel calmly, "you could not forget, for you never knew."

"Eh?"

"You were aware of the attachment of your son, some thirty years ago now, to my daughter Ella, my own, my only child. But you never knew that they were actually married."

"Great Heaven! Across a broomstick in your wretched encampment, I suppose?"

"No, John Cawsand; not so. They were married at St. Agnes Church in Boston, and by the rites of your creed."

He paused, and taking a worn and shabby leather case from his inside pocket, opened it, and bringing forth a paper, held it in his hand.

"There is a copy of the certificate of the marriage, and you can see the original whenever you care to visit St. Agnes Church."

Mr. Cawsand snatched the document from the Gypsy's fingers, and carrying it to the light, eagerly scanned its contents.

"The old clergyman who married them still lives," added Lovel, "and the other papers can be seen. I allude to the certificates of birth and baptism."

John Cawsand came back from the window, and stared excitedly at Ivan, and then at the weather-beaten man whom he had caused to attend there.

The actor was flushed and nervous, and stood regarding the two principal persons of the scene with an earnestness which was almost painful.

"Your story," said Mr. Cawsand, "has been cunningly conceived, and this paper has been executed according to prescribed form; but if you have no further proofs, do you think I can be cajoled by such a flimsy attempt? Do you mean to tell me that my favorite son acted as you would insinuate without my knowledge, and that he would deceive me? Do you think it possible that he could have made such an alliance, and that nothing would have been known of it—that nothing would have leaked out in all these years? Man, it is impossible!"

"I swear before Heaven, it is true! I had moved my tribe that year to the neighborhood of Northam, and the young man was parted from us. All the village, except his father, knew that he came to visit my child

Ella, and when I struck my tents for the summer he found out our new abode, and came round in his yacht. I forbade him; I told him to go back and seek a mate among his equals; but the youth was hot and resisted. He proposed to marry her on condition that we kept the matter secret, and in spite of counsel he had his way. It was on the occasion of his last visit that his vessel was wrecked, and he perished."

"And the wife?"

"She died." The Gypsy bent his forehead in his hand. "She died within the twelvemonth of her widowhood. She had been taken from among us to a close and busy town, and when the poor lad was lost she broke her heart and followed him."

"And the child?"

"I took him. I kept him in the caravan till old enough, and then I placed him at school, giving him the name of Ivan Berrington. 'Ivan,' as you know, sir, is but another form of 'John.' I set by money for the purpose, for I knew who the child was, and who he would be hereafter, and under his new name I had him educated. I knew well what I was doing, John Cawsand. I was determined that my poor child's boy should one day have his rights, and I made the sacrifice. The clergyman who married his parents and christened him afterward took him as a pupil, and did justice by him. At eighteen years he won some position which entitled him to begin a career at college, and since that time he has worked his own way and become what he is."

"Do you say you can prove all this?" demanded John Cawsand, in an altered voice.

"I swear to do so. I swear to bring such proof as shall convince you without the shadow of a doubt!"

The other was silent a moment; then he suddenly approached Ivan, and drawing him to the window, scrutinized his features.

"Is it so?" he asked, convulsively, as he fancied he traced a likeness—"is it so? What can you tell me yourself?"

"Believe me, sir," answered Berrington, on whom a visible effect had been produced, "that I am surprised and amazed equally with yourself. I have heard the greater part of this story for the first time in my life; but I can quite corroborate that portion of it which relates to myself. All along I have known that there was some mystery attached to me, but my grandfather, Lovel, has always promised that at the fitting time it should be disclosed to me. I knew that it related to my parentage, because the name of Berrington is otherwise unknown to me; but that my suspicions ever pointed in the direction of Beechwood I most solemnly deny."

The old gentleman moved away, and paced the room for several minutes. The emotions within him were multitudinous and conflicting. At one time his countenance was dark and lowering; at another, pleased and gentle.

As his eye fell upon the gaunt old Gypsy, with his gray and straggling locks, his tattered habiliments, and his half-proud, half-deferential mien, the long-standing antipathy came out afresh; and then, again, as he turned and regarded the actor, the man who had won his heart by his own intrinsic excellence, his gaze became kindly almost to tenderness.

Suddenly he recollected something; and pausing in his walk before Richard Lovel, he asked:

"And this woman—this assassin—what of her?"

"Sir," replied the Gypsy, "she was his playmate"—he bent his head toward Ivan—"and his only companion while he dwelt with us, and she loved him. For some reason, she has fancied that she has been supplanted. Not that she had the right to claim his love in return, for his lips have been guiltless of vows, and his actions have been pure. But the poor girl's heart was torn with jealousy. She believed herself scorned and forgotten, and the young lady, she knew, had injured her."

"What! Clara Meredith injured the Gypsy wench? How could the woman be jealous of her?"

"Because she saw that she loved John Cawsand, your grandson!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE TURN OF FORTUNES.

"CLARA, my dear," said Mrs. Witherley, one forenoon, as she entered the drawing-room of Sunnyside and found the young lady alone at the piano, "a visitor has just arrived, and I shouldn't be surprised if you are wanted to entertain him."

"A visitor, dear Mrs. Witherley? Who can it possibly be?"

"One who will be pleased to see you, I dare say; but I scarcely know whether you will be equally gratified to see him."

"Tell me, like a dear creature, who it is."

"Well, then, your tall, dark acquaintance of Beechwood."

"Mr. John Cawsand?"

"Yes, my dear, the same."

Clara had asked the question with but ordinary interest, for a caller was nothing extraordinary at her father's house; but when she heard the name, the rich crimson blood mantled in her cheeks, and she rose to cover her confusion.

"I suppose you are at home, dear?" asked the old lady, who had observed the effect of her communication.

"Yes; I think so," said Clara, hesitatingly.

"Very well, dear. If he should ask to see you, I will bring him here."

Mrs. Witherley quitted the room, and left her charge alone to recover herself.

It was two months since the memorable interview with the Gypsy at Beechwood Villa, and during that period the actor had merged into John Cawsand's grandson.

Proofs the most incontestable and testimony the most irrefragable had been produced and sifted. Localities and people had been visited and examined, and, in the end, the heir had been acknowledged, and his grandfather, always singularly prepossessed in his favor, had welcomed him to his roof, and opened to him afresh that part of his heart which his early grief had hitherto closed.

To one person only the discovery had been unpleasant, and that was Herbert. Indeed, the repugnance which he had experienced on their first meeting increased to such an extent that when Ivan's position was placed beyond doubt, Captain Cawsand suddenly found out that the term of his leave of absence expired the next day, and he rejoined his regiment forthwith.

The camp at Gypsy Corner had disappeared never to return. Mr. Cawsand, as one of the conditions for not proceeding against the unfortunate niece of Richard Lovel, had paid down to that individual a thousand dollars, stipulating that the whole tribe should leave the State and find another settlement, the money being a compensation for the compulsory shift of locality.

But to go back to Sunnyside.

Clara Meredith had not long to turn over in her mind the bearing she ought to adopt toward the visitor, nor to repress those turbulent emotions which had been stirred by the notice which Mrs. Witherley had given her.

A light tap at the drawing-room door warned the young lady that some one was about to enter, and immediately afterward her chaperon again presented herself, accompanied by the gentleman in question.

"Clara, my love, here's Mr. Berrington—I mean, Mr. Cawsand! He says he cannot go back to Beechwood without seeing you. But you must not keep him long, for your father wants to take him round the grounds."

"Miss Meredith, I am delighted to see you!" he said, advancing and taking her hand. "I am on my way home from New York, where I

have been on business, and I could not pass your home without calling."

Clara smiled a welcome, and blushed so deeply that Cawsand turned to Mrs. Witherley and inquired for her neuralgia.

"Thanks, it is better. But I have to be careful. Indeed, I cannot stand that open window there." She threw her handkerchief over her head, and brought the ends beneath her chin. "You will excuse me, Clara—won't you, dear? Only for a moment, you know; but you will excuse me—won't you?"

Cawsand said nothing, and Clara looked embarrassed.

Meanwhile the old lady smiled adieu, and vanished.

"Miss Meredith," said the gentleman, again approaching her, "it seems an age since I last saw you. You were then pale and weak; but now, how you are changed! I never saw you looking better."

"Yes, thank you—I am well again now. Will you not sit down?"

"Tell me first that you congratulate me on acquiring my new position," he said, laughing pleasantly.

"Believe me that I do, most sincerely. And once more let me thank you for your care, and for all that you did for me when you discovered me on that dreadful afternoon. I shall never forget it. I am sure I owe my life to you."

"I wish I thought so," said Cawsand, gayly.

"How?"

"Because I should be tempted to claim it."

The girl looked at him wonderingly.

She hardly caught his meaning, and her eyes seemed to question him for an explanation.

"Clara," he said, softly, and drawing still nearer to her, "am I right in thinking, am I presumptuous in hoping, that I may yet watch over that life and make it the solace of my existence? May what has passed plead for me as the earnest of my devotion for the future? You know I love you, Clara. I told you so when I was hopeless and nameless. I tell you so now. I love you with all the strength of my nature, and to my dying day, requited or not, I shall love you the same."

He took her hand, and she did not withdraw it.

"Clara," he continued, gaining assurance by her passiveness, and pressing the fingers he held to his bosom, "am I too bold and rash? Can I dare to hope that one day you will be my wife?"

"Ivan," she said, raising her head, and gazing at him steadily with her deep-blue eyes, and adopting the name by which she had first known him, "if you think me worthy to come to a heart so noble as your own, take me to it. If you think my love can repay you for your devotion, you shall have it till my latest breath."

"Come, then, my own, my darling!"

The next instant he had locked her in his arms to his breast, and in that position they were discovered by Mrs. Witherley.

THE END.

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